



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3 3433 06817758 7

1. Spintrehein

Y R
Till

Je

SHEYKH HASSAN:

THE SPIRITUALIST.

A VIEW OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

BY

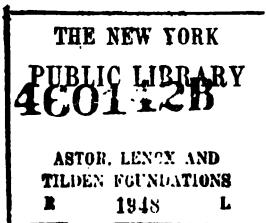
S. A. HILLAM.

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN & CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE,
PALL MALL. S.W.

1888.

b 15

All Rights Reserved.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. H. ALLEN AND CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE. S.W.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

TO

SIR GEORGE GROVE, D.C.L., LL.D.,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

March 1, 1880.



P R E F A C E.

THE object of the Author in writing this book, is to add his testimony from actual experience of the Power of the Rohanee or the Spiritual, and to state in a clear and decided manner that he has himself been present at several of the scenes described therein.

The book is written in the form of a story to make it more easily read by the general public; and though the Author has used the latitude allowed to

the writer of a story, and has also changed the names of the persons and the places, still it is right to state that he was present at the scenes described in Chapters VIII. and X.

One word more. The only means that an ordinary traveller to, or a temporary resident in, Oriental and Bible lands has of obtaining any information with regard to matters that concern the country, its people and their customs and traditions, is through a dragoman or native servant, whose interest in the knowledge sought or the research made is according to the amount of commission he may expect to derive. The Darweesh described in Chapter II. would be the one chosen to show forth the powers of the supernatural ; the result, a pecuniary

profit to the darweesh and to the dragoman.

The Author has been otherwise privileged by long residence in Syria, and by an intimate knowledge of the people and their language, but above all by a friendship with a man who was undoubtedly endowed with the wonderful power described—The Rohanee of the present work.

LONDON, *February, 1888.*

CONTENTS.

	CHAPTER	PAGE
KUTEIF	CHAPTER I.	1
THE DARWEESH	CHAPTER II.	13
SHEYKH HASSAN	CHAPTER III.	35
THE ROHANEE	CHAPTER IV.	53
RASHEEDEH	CHAPTER V.	73
THE NIGHT OF SORROW	CHAPTER VI.	113

	CHAPTER	PAGE
THE MONASTERY IN THE DESERT	CHAPTER VII.	149
THE ADJURATION	CHAPTER VIII.	166
THE BEDOUIN ATTACK	CHAPTER IX.	188
BLOOD FOR BLOOD	CHAPTER X.	196
THE UNFINISHED LETTER	CHAPTER XI.	214

SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

CHAPTER I.

KUTEIF.

I WAS staying a few years ago in Kuteif, a small town about forty miles north-east of Damascus—on the road to Tûdmor, Palmyra—the ancient Tadmor built by Solomon, the great King of Israel.

I went to live at Kuteif with the object of making a close study of the Arabic language and its literature under a highly-learned

2 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Muhammadan Sheykh, who was the chief 'Alem—religious and secular teacher—at the College founded by Salahiddeen, the famous Khaleefeh and warrior, who built and endowed the college after he had recovered Jerusalem from the Crusaders. I took letters of introduction to Sheykh Moosa from some influential friends at Damascus, and he kindly allowed me to join the lectures at the college, a very unusual thing for a non-Mussulman student; and as I was the only European in the town, I adopted the native dress so as not to be conspicuous, and thus avoid the annoyances to which a stranger in a foreign garb is liable in Oriental towns that are out of the common track and unfrequented by Europeans.

I took a small house in the Moslem

quarter of the town, and engaged as servants, to look after the house and to cook for me, a Muhammadan and his mother. The latter occupied the inner part of the house, and though I lived in it for a considerable time I never once saw her, so strictly secluded can the *harem*, or women's apartments in a Muhammadan household, be made.

Kuteif was a very prettily situated town at the foot of one of the hills of the Anti-Lebanon range, which, like most of the hills and valleys of the district, was covered with pines, firs, and Syrian oaks. There were two or three large caves on the side nearest the town, and out of one of them a stream of water flowed into the valley, which was laid out into beautiful gardens and orchards. The town contained about

4 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

six thousand inhabitants, two-thirds of whom were Muhammadans and the rest Christians. They had all lived very peaceably together; and though the Christians in other towns and villages in Syria had suffered very much during the terrible troubles and massacres in 1860, yet in this town, through the great influence of Sheykh Moosa, who was a man of very wide and liberal views, they had been unmolested.

The people of the town carried on a thriving trade with a large and powerful Bedouin tribe whose tents were pitched during certain periods of the year at a short distance, in the desert district which bordered the town towards the east.

Many of the Bedouins were frequently in the town, and so was their chief, a person

highly respected, but, at the same time, much feared by the towns-people. He was a man who always kept his word—a somewhat rare custom amongst the so-called noble sons of the desert—but he was one, too, who never forgave an injury nor forgot a wrong.

The class that I joined at the college was that of Sheykh Moosa, and was chiefly composed of students who were finishing their studies; and, as Sheykh Moosa's lectures were held in very high esteem, they were often attended by *'Alema* resident at Kuteif, or who had come there for a short stay. I made friends with many of my fellow-students, and learned a great deal from them about the manners and customs, as well as the superstitions, of the Syrian Muhammadans.

6 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

There was one subject, however, about which I could get very little valuable information—that was, the real view taken by the more educated and enlightened Moslems of the *'Ilm e' Rohanee*, the Knowledge and the Power of the Spiritual. Sheykh Moosa rarely referred to it in his lectures, and then only in a cursory way, as if he wished to avoid the subject.

The 'Alema all professed a profound belief in the existence of the knowledge and power of the Spiritual; but they said that it was only known to and used by those who were specially endowed with it, and that they themselves could tell me nothing as to its cause or effect.

The Bishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church at Kuteif told me that he too knew that the knowledge and power existed, but

that as it was magic or witchcraft, and therefore contrary to Christian doctrine, he never did and never would enter into any examination of the subject. There were persons among the Muhammadans who had the power and who used it. This power had been transmitted from the earliest times ; the ancient Egyptians practised it, and so did the Israelites, to some extent, and King Solomon, in his latter days had recourse to it. This was all that he could tell me. I tried to obtain from other sources trustworthy accounts of facts, but for a long time failed to do so.

On the top of the hill above the town, and among the pines and firs that grew upon it, there was a large stone building covered over in the centre by a domed roof. This building had been erected in the

8 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

twelfth century over the tomb of a Muhammadan *Weli*, or minor saint, such a *Weli* being regarded, according to Moslem custom and local tradition, the guardian saint of the district. Small pilgrimages were periodically made to the *Weli*'s tomb, the people from the neighbourhood going thither either in fulfilment of a vow or with a *Kawad*—a sheep or goat—to be sacrificed as a thank-offering after summer or autumn harvest. These were old heathen customs, handed down from time immemorial. The ancient Canaanitish grove on the top of a hill dedicated to Baal has been transformed into the tomb called *Makam*, or place of abode of a Muhammadan *Weli*, and the Phœnician or Canaanite feast has become, in very similar form, place, and time, the Moslem festival,

as the priest and prophet of Baal has been succeeded by the modern darweesh.

I went often to the top of the hill for the fresh air and to enjoy the magnificent view of the country round, which, when seen by the evening light, was especially beautiful.

Looking west, Jebel e' Sheykh, hoary Hermon, stands out in perfect splendour high above the other Lebanon hills—spread out in one long panorama—with ever snow-clad peak of dazzling whiteness, contrasting strongly with the dark shadows in the deep valleys and with the foliage of the firs and pines and oaks that abound there.

Many small towns and villages and hamlets can be seen in this Lebanon range, in all the enchantment that distance lends so effectively to Oriental views and things—

10 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

some of them almost at the spur of a hill, others in the valley itself, near some stream of limpid water fed by Lebanon snows; others, again, perched up on the very summit of some very high and precipitous hill, so steep and rugged as to seem unscalable, in a nest of rocks looking defiant in the strength of their unapproachable fastness.

The colours of the hills, reflecting as they do the golden light of the setting sun, are splendid in their richness and variety, and the most graphic description can but fall short of the reality. At first the colour of burnished gold, then of warm orange, then that of fiery red, and then of a rich crimson, and at last a royal purple, giving at first distinct and separate and then united effects, effects of atmosphere and sky and

cloud, of earth and air, always beautiful, but of a beauty far too changing and evanescent to be interpreted truthfully—that is, with all their warmth and intensity of colour—by the painter's art.

As the sun sinks behind the range of mountains these glorious colours fade into gray, and the hills become shrouded by the sombre gloom which follows so quickly a sunset in Oriental lands.

To the eastward the Syrian desert is spread out in seeming endlessness—one vast sea of yellow sand—as far as the eye could span, and apparently without a house, a tree, or shrub, to break its great monotony.

The prospect on either side, west and east, is most impressive; on one, life, growth, vigour, trees, running streams,

12 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

towns, and villages; on the other, death and desolation, a huge inhospitable waste, lifeless and forsaken—contrasts so common in every form of outward aspect and of inner life in that unchanging and yet changeful East.

CHAPTER II.

THE DARWEESH.

ON my way up, one afternoon, to the Weli's tomb I met a crowd of people—men, women and children—who were also going there. They were preceded by a number of men and boys, some of whom carried large flags covered with inscriptions—verses from the Kur'an—while others had drums and cymbals of various sizes, with which they made a most deafening noise, but which they tried to do in unison. The rest of the people were singing in time to this primi-

14 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

tive music, while some of them danced and jumped about in a very excited manner.

On approaching them, I saw four or five men in the crowd, who, stripped to the girdle, were dancing with drawn swords, with the edge of which they struck themselves every now and then across the naked part of their bodies; but no blood was ever drawn, as the stroke was very cleverly made, and every time that they stood to display their powers to the wondering people, songs of joy and admiration were shrieked by the women.

There was also a darweesh in the procession, who was not stripped like the others, but who was bare-headed and wore his long hair loose over his shoulders. He kept turning, or rather throwing, his head incessantly from one side to the other, shouting

all the time “ Allah ! Allah ! ” He continued to do so till the procession arrived at the tomb of the Weli. The sword-dancers then stopped their performance, and the music ceased. A ring was formed, and the long-haired darweesh stood in its centre.

The music then struck up again, beginning very slowly, but gradually increasing in rapidity ; and, keeping time with it, the darweesh swayed his body and jerked his head from one side to the other, slowly at first, but afterwards very fast, shouting all the time “ Allah ! Allah ! ” He continued to do so till he actually foamed at the mouth and fell down, apparently senseless, to the ground.

The procession was led by another darweesh, who wore a large red turban, and a robe made up of small pieces of cloth of

16 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

various colours, and over this a cloak of green silk. He had a long string of large wooden beads round his neck, and he carried a short spear in his hand—all these to denote authority, holiness, and poverty. He took till then no actual part in the proceedings, but mumbled and muttered all the time in a low tone to himself until the long-haired darweesh fell down, when he went up to him, stroked his face and beard, and muttered in a low voice some words in his ear. He then took hold of his hand, and, calling on the dead Weli for assistance, raised the darweesh up and pulled him into the building, and in a few minutes brought him out again perfectly quiet and rational.

The people then rushed up to the darweesh in the red turban, whom they called

Sheykh Kasem, and kissed his hand as a mark of devotion and regard.

There was a man of Kuteif in the crowd with whom I was acquainted, and I went up to him and asked him to tell me what these proceedings meant, and who was the man in the red turban. My friend told me that this Sheykh Kasem was a great darweesh and a very holy man ; that he lived in a village in the neighbourhood, and was highly respected, even to veneration, by everyone, because he was endowed with great powers over man and beast and spirits and genni. The procession to the Weli's tomb was in fulfilment of a vow made by the chief man of a neighbouring village, and Sheykh Kasem had, in honour of the occasion, conducted the proceedings himself. The men who beat themselves

18 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

with swords had done so by the express command of Sheykh Kasem, and it was by the power with which he was invested that they were not hurt.

The man with the long hair was also a darweesh, but of a lower order than Sheykh Kasem ; he was led away by a spirit which possessed him, but over which he himself had no control, as the spirit only recognized Sheykh Kasem's authority.

My informant, a Muhammadan merchant at Kuteif, but not an educated man, told me that most people believed in Sheykh Kasem's powers, and that they knew he could call up spirits and supernatural beings, and make them appear in human or other form, and that he was also able to do many other wonderful things.

I said to my friend that I should like to become acquainted with the Sheykh, and, on being introduced, I told the Sheykh what my friend had said about his great powers, and that I should consider it a special favour if he would allow me to be present at one of his spirit séances; but he made great difficulties, and seemed to require a great deal of persuasion before he would promise to give me an ocular demonstration of them. A display of this occult science was a serious matter, and an expensive one, as certain rare drugs and other ingredients were necessary to be used during the incantation. But after a while Sheykh Kasem allowed himself to be persuaded by my friend, and we arranged to have a meeting before long at my house.

20 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

I was very glad that I had found at last the opportunity of getting the information that I sought, and that I could also be present at one of the meetings with the spirits. I was, however, not quite satisfied with the Sheykh's manner and conversation ; his language clearly showed him to be an illiterate, ignorant man, and the oft-repeated remark that he made about the expense that must be incurred for the purchase of the precious drugs and gums for the incantation, made me think that his powers were very closely linked with money matters. I, however, persuaded myself that as the unseen beings often choose strange and eccentric individuals for their human agents or mediums, the case of Sheykh Kasem would not be an exceptional one. I therefore gave him a

few silver *medjicies*, or silver dollars, for the purchase of the necessary articles.

I told Sheykh Moosa, after the lecture the next day, what I had seen the evening before, and of the appointment I had made with Sheykh Kasem; and Sheykh Moosa said that it would be well for me to see what Sheykh Kasem could do, and after that we would talk further on the matter.

The evening arrived, and I waited for Sheykh Kasem most impatiently, but, as punctuality was not one of his endowments, he came two hours after the appointed time. He was accompanied by a young man, a newly-made sheykh, who wore a large green turban to denote, as he claimed, direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad. My friend who introduced

22 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

me to Sheykh Kasem was also with them.

On entering the room, which, by his orders, had been stripped of all its furniture, and nothing left in it but two or three small prayer-rugs, Sheykh Kasem walked straight up to a corner at the further end, and threw himself down on one of the carpets. He said nothing to me, and did not even bid me the customary salutation. He was mumbling to himself, in a low guttural voice, certain words which I could not understand.

After a short time he stopped mumbling, sat up, and closed his eyes, then began to gesticulate, or rather to throw out his arms first in one direction and then in another. "He is now in a trance," his assistant

whispered to me, and is communicating with the spirits."

Sheykh Kasem continued in his rather wild trance for about a quarter of an hour; he then opened his eyes and made a sign to his assistant, who went out and brought in a brazier of live charcoal that had been prepared for the incense. It was put in the centre of the room, and the two Sheykhhs then placed themselves on either side of it. I sat opposite Sheykh Kasem and watched all his proceedings. He then drew out of his pocket a small packet containing the incense made with the drugs, and gave it to his assistant to put gradually on the fire.

Sheykh Kasem, still seated, then began to move his head and body backwards and forwards and from one side to the other,

24 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

chanting in a very screechy voice, "Ya hooo—Ya hooo." Oh He ! After a while he changed this into "Ya Mubarak !" O blessed one ! " Ya Taroosh," " Ya Tarooosheen"—supposed names of certain great spirits or ginnis.

This went on for a considerable time; the room became quite full of smoke from the incense; Sheykh Kasem's invocations grew louder, and he then rose, walked several times round the room, calling at short intervals on Taroosh and Tarooosheen to appear. Suddenly he stopped, and pointed with his hand to one direction in the room, as if he saw something there; but as none of us did so, he went on with the incantation, still calling on Taroosh and on Tarooosheen; but it was all without avail, neither Taroosh nor Tarooosheen

would obey the summons. This went on till all the incense had been spent; then Sheykh Kasem threw himself again on the carpet and closed his eyes. His assistant then took his hand, and with a strong effort, after calling on several prophets and Welis for assistance, raised him up. The smoke and the strong smell of the incense, and the feeling which would come, even in spite of myself, that I was being deceived, made me somewhat impatient; but Sheykh Kasem explained that the spirits do not always appear at a first bidding, especially in the presence of the uninitiated, and, as he had found that the stars were not sufficiently auspicious that night, he would try again on the following one, with, as he believed, certain success. My friend who came with him also said that I ought

26 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

not to be disappointed, as it was a common occurrence for the spirits to refuse to come the first time; and at his suggestion I again gave Sheykh Kasem a further sum of money for more incense.

The next evening Sheykh Kasem's performances were of a similar character to the last, though he seemed to put a little more energy into his gesticulations; but the spirits remained obdurate and refused to appear.

My friend urged me to allow them to have a third trial, and I declined at first, but at last consented, and gave some more medjidges for fresh incense. Sheykh Kasem and his assistant—this time the latter took a more active part in the performance—went through the incantations with increased vigour, howling and gesticulating

almost to violence ; and then they suddenly stopped and stood still for a while, pointing with their hands to one of the corners of the room, as though they had seen something there. They then walked slowly to the corner of the room, and sat down for a short time. Sheykh Kasem then began to talk to an imaginary person, who, he declared, was the spirit called Taroosh ; but I failed to see anything or to hear any other voices than those of Sheykh Kasem and his assistant.

This went on for a short time, after which Sheykh Kasem and his assistant bade the imaginary spirit farewell, and then told me that they had been informed that the spirits were very much engaged during the week, but that after the following one they would be ready to give per-

28 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

sonal audience. This was more than enough to convince me that Sheykh Kasem's pretended art was a mere imposition, and that his sole object had been to gain money.

I went to Sheykh Moosa the next day, and told him what Sheykh Kasem had done, and how he had completely failed to carry out, during the three séances at my house, what he said he was able to do. "It seems the more strange," I said, "that such observances as those that I witnessed at the Weli's tomb on the hill, observances which, I am told, form part of the Muhammadan faith and of its religious rites, should be entrusted to ignorant and illiterate men like Sheykh Kasem."

"No, no," said Sheykh Moosa in reply, "the ceremonies such as you saw at the

Weli's tomb form no part of our faith or of its religious rites. Our Prophet never instituted them, they are neither enjoined by the Kur'an nor by our religious traditions, and all our great *Khateebs*, or preachers and 'Alemas have preached and written against their practice, but, as they are very ancient customs handed down to us from heathen times, and being encouraged by such men as Sheykh Kasem, the common people cling to their observance. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to change the superstitions of the uneducated masses, in many cases even of educated people, especially when such superstitions are accompanied by a form of outward display, procession and music, and the performance of pretended miracles, such as you saw at the Weli's tomb.

“ This so-called Sheykh is a man who imposes on the credulity of the ignorant or superstitious, and makes a living by it. His assistants are merely confederates, who persuade the people that all that he says and does is true, in order to keep up his prestige and to share his gains.

“ I did not,” continued Sheykh Moosa, “ try to dissuade you from witnessing Sheykh Kasem’s performances, though I knew that all his powers were pretended and that he himself was an imposter, because I thought it well for you to become acquainted with this form of superstition as it exists among our people.”

“ But how is it,” I asked, “ that educated and enlightened Muhammedans believe in the existence of a power that is called *E’ Rohanee*, or the Spiritual, by which

those who are endowed with it can hold personal communication with spirits and unseen beings ? ”

“ I am myself,” replied Sheykh Moosa, “ a profound believer in the knowledge and power of the Rohanee, and I know that some people have been and others are endowed with it, and are able by its means to enter into personal and visible communication with beings of the unseen world ; but they are persons very different to Sheykh Kasem. Such men have, by many years of self-denial and meditation, devoted themselves entirely to the study of the spiritual life, and the power has been specially decreed to them, and they use it for the furtherance and the growth of their spiritual knowledge—the life of the soul, and of the hidden and mysterious world and of

32 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

its unseen inhabitants. This knowledge and power being far different, indeed, from the so-called power or art which professes to call spirits for the most trivial reason, or summons them merely to satisfy people's curiosity, or to make love-philters, or to discover hidden treasures. This power is false, and has but one aim—money, the desire for gain—and is very similar, I should think, to the art of the so-called Spiritualists in Europe and America, of whom I have both read and heard, who, too, profess to communicate with the spirits of departed human beings, calling themselves their agents or mediums; the spirits, when called upon, announcing their spiritual presence sometimes with parts only of their spiritualized bodies, their hands or their feet, or by the

strange and inexplicable—I should say puerile and ludicrous—way of over-turning tables, raising sofas in the air, and playing on fiddles. Many, I am told, of your high and educated people have allowed themselves to be persuaded of, and have indeed believed in, this supposed power; and can one be surprised if the uneducated and ignorant here in the East, the land of superstition and imagination, should accept as true the powers that such men as Sheykh Kasem profess to have?"

"I am," repeated Sheykh Moosa, "unable myself to give you all the information that you desire to have with regard to the Rohanee. It is better for you to obtain it from someone who is in possession of the Knowledge and the Power—though even then you could only receive

34 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

it in a very limited way. But I will ask a friend, an 'Alem, at present in this town, who is able, and who may be willing, at my request, to help you to learn what you are anxious to know."

CHAPTER III.

SHEYKH HASSAN.

AMONG the 'Alema who sometimes attended Sheykh Moosa's classes there was one whose acquaintance I could not for a long time make. He generally came late to the lecture, and left the moment it was over, before everybody else. He never spoke to anyone, and beyond the customary salutation of *A' Salaamu aley kom*, "Peace be unto you," he never even made a remark. He always sat at the end of the room, with his head bent forward

36 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

supported on one hand, and hardly ever raised his eyes from the floor, and sitting perfectly still, except now and then nodding his head in token of approval of what Sheykh Moosa was saying.

Sheykh Hassan *el Maghrebee*, an Arabic term for a native of Algiers, Tunis, or Tripoli, was a man of striking appearance. He was tall and thin, had a long face, dark, or rather yellow-brown skin ; a large aquiline nose ; a black moustache ; a short, thin beard, streaked with grey, which only covered his chin, the sides of his face being quite smooth ; and small, restless, inquiring jet-black eyes ; his eyebrows were always knitted, and his features wore a sad, clouded expression, which conveyed the impression that he suffered from some great trouble or sorrow, and

that he had little sleep or repose. He looked like a man of fifty, though he could not have been so old; and he always seemed to be extremely shy and nervous. He had long delicate hands, and in one he generally carried a rosary, which he appeared to use frequently (the rosary of the Muhammedans contains one hundred and one beads, the number of the Divine attributes).

I tried several times to enter into conversation with Sheykh Hassan, but he gave me no encouragement. I attributed this to fanaticism, and as the Maghrabees are as a rule much more fanatical than the Syrians, I thought that he avoided me because I was a Christian.

Sheykh Moosa, a few days after our last conversation, invited me to his house to

38 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

meet Sheykh Hassan. He wished me to become acquainted with Sheykh Hassan, and, if possible, to gain his friendship; as he could, if he thought right, give me the information that I desired on the subject of the Rohanee.

Sheykh Moosa had several times spoken to Sheykh Hassan about me, and he promised to help me if he could.

Sheykh Hassan asked me to call upon him at his house, near the mosque, which he occupied by himself alone, because there we should be undisturbed. I did so the following afternoon, and found him in his room, and, as I entered, he rose to receive me in a peculiar and nervous way.

The room, an ordinary-sized one, was very bare of furniture: a small prayer-

carpet, a brass jug and basin ; a common octagonal table, on it a brass oil lamp ; a wooden bench, raised two or three inches from the ground, covered with a blanket, forming the bedstead, bed, and covering, and occasional divan ; a small box which contained his books and clothes, an earthen-ware *shérbi*, or drinking-water bottle : such was the whole furniture of Sheykh Hassan's room—all denoting extreme frugality ; and his careworn expression and nervous manner and soft tone of voice awakened a feeling of sympathy with him for the hidden sorrow from which he appeared to be suffering ; and yet one could not but see, after a few minutes' conversation with him, that he was a man of deep thought and great perception.

Sheykh Hassan told me that Sheykh

40 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Moosa had asked him to tell me what he could about the Knowledge and the Power of the Rohanee, and, as he believed that it was not merely out of curiosity that I sought this information, he would give me as much as it was permitted to him to impart.

After I had had several interviews with him, he also said that he hoped to take me to one or more of the Adjurations of the unseen beings that he intended to hold early the following month, so that I might be able to see some of the spirits who might be called upon to appear.

“I have been preparing myself for the Adjuration,” he said, “during the last month, and shall continue to do so for another fortnight; but before I can allow you to be present, it will be necessary for you

to know something about this great work. I cannot give you any of the knowledge or power. I can only explain to you its object and its aim; but you will have to be prepared in the manner required of all who are privileged to be present at an Adjuration, although as eye-witnesses only.

“The qualifications necessary are endurance and self-control, both physical and mental; these are absolutely essential, and, unless you possess both in a high degree, your presence at the Adjuration will only hinder the work.

“You must,” he continued, “make up your mind and be prepared to resist every effort that will be made against you by beings who will appear to you, some in terrible forms, others in a more sympathetic or gentle guise; the first to intimi-

42 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

date and to terrify, the second to appeal to your kinder nature, but both equally having the object of thwarting the proceedings.

“ You must be prepared for all this, but your powers of endurance and self-control must be put to the proof. If you agree to these conditions, sit here while I read some exercises ; then go back to your house, stop there three full days and nights, that will be till Friday afternoon, then come here and give me your answer ; on that will depend if we proceed or not. When I have concluded my exercises and invocations, say nothing to me, but go straight to your house, and on your arrival tell your servant to deny you to everybody for three days, give yourself up entirely to the one thought, that of being present

with me at the Adjuration, and your desire to be a witness of the great power of the Rohanee ; let this be your one thought and wish during the time, forget all else. I will give you a book that you may read during the time ; it is one on self-control, the power of the mind over the body. " You may," he added " eat and drink in your usual way, and sit or walk about in your garden, in fact you need not change any of your habits, except that you must not drink anything forbidden by our law, neither wine nor strong drink. " I shall await you on Friday afternoon. "

I agreed to Sheykh Hassan's proposal, and he gave me the book on self-control, and at once began his exercises by reading out of a book in so low a tone that I could not understand what he said.

44 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

After that he chanted an invocation for some time, also in a very low tone. He then rose and made a sign to me to withdraw, which I did at once, and went straight to my house. It was about an hour before sunset. I told my servant that I intended to stop in the house till Friday for meditation, and that I could not see anybody who might call, as I did not wish to be disturbed, but that in other respects my arrangements would be the same as usual. My servant did not show any surprise at my request; it was not an uncommon thing for a student or an 'alem to stop at home and be alone for a few days, and my absence from the lectures would therefore neither attract attention nor provoke a remark.

I took my usual walk in the garden

at sunset, and afterwards dined in the verandah of trellis-work over which a vine had been trailed. I thought much over what Sheykh Hassan had said, and read a few chapters of the book which he had given me, and then I took my bath and retired to rest at my usual time.

I slept for about three hours, and then awoke with a feeling as of a great weight and tightness on my chest, and could only breathe with effort. I lay very still for a few minutes, and then I thought I heard close to me a soft, quiet voice say:

“Thou canst not—thou must not. It is wrong. It will be very terrible. Thou must abandon it. Thou must not attempt it.”

The tightness and weight on my chest seemed to increase, and I tried in vain to speak or to call out, but my tongue felt

46 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

tied, and even my limbs seemed unable to move; but after a strong effort I managed to light the candle near my bedside.

I had that strange feeling all over me, known well to those who have ever suffered from strong ague, the wretched sensation one has in the early stage of the cold attack, a peculiar aching, almost to acuteness in every bone.

I could not sleep any more that night, and sat till morning reading Sheykh Hassan's book, and I determined to follow up the matter at any cost. I had a long sleep after my mid-day meal, and felt quite rested and refreshed.

I spent my second evening as I had the preceding one, and retired at the ordinary time. My bed-room was an inner room and had one window only, which had its

shutters closed and a heavy curtain drawn over it, in order to keep out the morning air which, in the East, at certain seasons in the year, is very injurious to anyone who is asleep.

I slept very soundly for three or four hours, when I was awakened by a voice that I thought called me by name. It was quite dark when I awoke, so that I could see nothing, but all at once there was a pale light thrown on part of the wall on one side of the room. It was clear and distinct, but not bright, and my gaze was at once fixed upon it. I could not turn my head away, nor could I close my eyes. I felt almost paralyzed with fear. I seemed to have lost all power over myself, nor could I resist or throw off the feeling of dread. I was in com-

48 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

plete possession of all my senses, but felt quite powerless. There was the same heavy feeling on my chest that I had the night before, but more intense, almost to agony. Still my mind was quite clear, and I renewed my determination even under the most trying circumstances to go on to the end. I kept my eyes on the pale light: suddenly I saw a form standing against the wall in the light: I could not see any features, only a form as of a human being. Then a voice came from it in low measured tones:—

“Thou must not proceed with what thou seekest. Thou must not know—thou wilt suffer if thou dost.”

“I must—I will!” I cried, after a strong effort to speak. “What is decreed shall be.”

The form came on slowly towards my bed. It stood close to me, and a strange mesmeric thrill passed through me as the figure extended its arm towards me.

“The will of the All-knowing alone directs—to Him alone I submit,” I cried.

The form and the light at once disappeared. I jumped up, and lighted the candle, and passed the rest of the night again without sleep.

My last night of probation had now come. I quite expected that the ordeal would be severer than the last, but I resolved to let nothing deter me from my purpose. I did not go to bed, but, having slept a good deal in the day, I decided to sit up all night. I did so in my bed-room, reading Sheykh Hassan’s book till about midnight. All at once the

candles, which I had put in fresh half an hour before, went out, and I was left in darkness for a time. The pale light however that I had seen before re-appeared on the wall, and then several forms advanced towards me. I could see their forms, but could discern no features.

“Man,” said a voice coming from one of them, “we come to warn thee for the third and last time. Thou must not proceed with what thou seekest to know. Thou canst not, thou must not know. These are mysteries that cannot be revealed to such as thou. Thou wilt not be able to endure. Thy self-control will fail thee.”

The forms crowded round me. I could hardly breathe. I made a strong effort to reply, but could not for some time;

and at last I answered in the words of the Kur'an: "Knowledge is from the All-knowing, and He giveth it to whom He will. He enlighteneth whom He would, and blindeth whom He would." The light and the forms vanished, and I relighted my candles and resumed reading the book.

I felt very tired—the strain had been great; but I was glad that I had still courage to go on, and that Sheykh Hassan would be able to give me further information and would take me to the Adjuration.

I went to his house in the afternoon, and found him waiting for me. I told him what I had seen and done during the last three days, and he appeared pleased that I had been able to endure the trial.

52 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

“I will now,” he said, “begin to tell you something about the Knowledge and Power of the Rohanee, so that you may be prepared for the Adjuration.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE ROHANEE.

“THE ‘Ilm E’ Rohanee,” said Sheykh Hassan, “is the Knowledge and possession of a spiritual Power, by which the person endowed with it is able to see and to understand some of the mysteries of the unseen world. He is also able, by its power, to have a real and personal communication with the spirits in this existing though hidden world, such spirits who are created beings and who have a

54 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

real individual existence, spirits both good and evil, and who are entirely distinct from the souls of departed human beings.

This power has existed from the earliest period of the World, even from before the time of Noah—on whom be peace!—but the Knowledge of it throughout all Ages has been vouchsafed to but few persons, because few have sought it or submitted themselves to its influence.

“The Rohanee, or The Spiritual, is in no way connected with the art called *E' Sehr*, magic or witchcraft, which is of an evil form, and is, in many cases, a pretended power; but which certain people claim to have, and for sordid purposes profess to use, in order to heal the sick, to find treasures, or to raise the spirits of the departed. All this is false, and is

used to deceive the superstitious and the ignorant.

“The 'Ilm, or Knowledge, of the Rohanee is composed of two divisions. The *Ilwee*, or the Heavenly; the *Suflee*, or the Earthly. The Ilwee confers the privilege of personal communication with those angels and good spirits who have the care of human beings, both living and departed, entrusted to them. The chief of these spirits is Abdael—on whom be peace !

“The Suflee, or Earthly, gives the power of a personal communication with, and a certain amount of control over, some of those evil spirits who, through rebellion, have separated themselves from the good angels, and, having placed themselves under the leadership of the chief rebel,

56 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Iblees—God grant us protection from him !—have been driven from the abodes of bliss, and have made their sojourn in this world.

“ These spirits have, through the subtlety of their chief, acquired a degree of power over man and over the earth which he inhabits ; and these evil ones—their account is with their Creator!—have knowledge of mysteries, which knowledge those who possess the power of the Rohanees desire to obtain.

“ The object of the 'Ilm is to acquaint the one who seeks it with the hidden and spiritual life, to acquaint him, and him alone, with the secrets of the past ; to reveal to him the events of the future, the mysteries of things that were before the creation of this world, the mysteries

of things that shall be after it has passed away ; to allow the soul to begin its education while still unseparated from the body ; to explain the real individual and distinct life of the soul during its union with the body, and of the life that awaits it after its severance therefrom, and of the unending life after it has again been united to the body ; to teach him to understand that it is the soul that lives and grows, that its existence is unbounded, unhampered by time or by space. It is the knowledge that gradually, even while it grows and develops, raises the veil from before one's view, that removes the scales from the eyes, and that opens a vista into the hidden mysteries of the past as well as the future. Some of these great secrets of the past and of the future are

58 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

known to a few of the fallen spirits ; they have been allowed to possess them on earth, as some of the greater spirits in Heaven have also been endowed with them ; but none are allowed to communicate them to any mortal beings except to those who have been predestined to receive them, and who have dedicated themselves to the Rohanee, and who, after long and severe trials patiently borne, have triumphed over the assaults to which they have been subjected by the evil spirits.

“ Part of the knowledge of these secrets must be obtained from these outcast beings, and is thus called Suflee—Earthly. These spirits regard the world as their own, and desire, though that wish and attempt is, and will ever be, defeated, to keep man-

kind in subjection to themselves alone, and to hold back the knowledge of the higher and hidden life; they therefore resist all attempts that men may make to obtain this knowledge, for by it a person who receives it acquires power over these fallen spirits, and they are afraid that by the spreading and the development of this knowledge their influence over mankind would diminish and ultimately cease altogether.

“ The knowledge of some of these secrets was obtained by prophets and 'Alema from the earliest times, but no one was ever permitted to impart or to communicate it to others ; and though it was of the greatest value and importance, it was only so to those who obtained it, and to each one individually and personally, as he could

only use it for his own individual education, and not for the outside world.

“The only person who was allowed to reveal some of these great secrets, obtained by the exceptional power with which he was invested over both human and spiritual beings, was Solomon, the son of David—on whom be peace!—the Prophet and King. His power over these erring spirits was almost unlimited; but he was allowed to convey this knowledge only by writing it in two books, and not by word of mouth. These books, treating as they did of the past and of the future, were to be preserved and read by the great 'Alema, and taught gradually to the people; but, as Solomon was called to the mercy of his God before he had quite finished writing the last part of the second book, and

while his attendants surrounded his dying bed, and were watching his last breath as his soul was just returning to its Creator, and before these attendants could prevent it, the chiefs of the outcast spirits carried the books away, and now keep them guarded with strict and jealous care, in order to prevent, if possible, any of the human race from obtaining a knowledge of their contents.

“The great object, then, of anyone who has, by the knowledge of the Rohanee, a power over these spirits, is to learn the contents of these books. How many have succeeded in doing so, I know not, for no one may divulge what he has learned from them.

“This, then, is what I seek now, and what I wish to obtain. And when I have

62 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

received the revelations, which must be first obtained by communication with these Earthly spirits and from the books in their possession, I shall be able to rise to a higher and more extensive knowledge, through the other branch of the 'Ilm, of the Rohanee, the Ilwee, or the Heavenly."

I listened to all Sheykh Hassan had said with great attention, and then asked him to tell me if this Power of the Rohanee could be imparted by one person to another, and how.

"No," he answered, "this power can only be obtained by those who have dedicated their lives to its search and acquirement, and who have been predestined by the Highest Will to acquire it. To a person so privileged to receive the Power of the Rohanee its possession must be his

most constant desire and most ardent hope, and by long years of meditation and prayer, by untiring watching and fasting ; the body must be forgotten, the earthly must be subdued ; his thoughts must be firmly fixed on the Almighty Power, which he must never cease to invoke. His whole being must ever be imbued with the constant wish, the burning longing, the merging of his entire self into that intense feeling of desire and hope ; and this not for one day or week or month, but for many long years, both by day and by night. Then—and if such be the Written Will, such the predestination—the great Name by which the power is obtained will be revealed to him. No voice, no sound, is heard, but it is shown in Characters which leave their imprint on his

64 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

very soul, and the power by the Revelation of the Great Name is thus imparted.

“The Earthly Spirits are divided into eleven groups each of which is presided over by a chief. Nine of these groups are minor, while the remaining tenth and eleventh are composed of the great ones among the spirits. The chief of the tenth group is called Mareech, and the chief of the eleventh is called Shanhoresh. To these two some of the Mysteries that I seek have been revealed, to Mareech the hidden secrets of the past, to Shanhoresh the mysteries of the future. They are the Keepers of the Books of King Solomon—one of which contains the knowledge of the times that have passed away, the other deals with the things of those that are yet to come.

In order to become qualified to have audience with Mareech and Shanhoresh it is necessary to begin with the lowest of the minor groups, and to proceed, by successive revelations, until the ninth is reached; and then, after that, converse can be held with the two last and highest, either together or separately.

“ These are the highest of the fallen angels that ever appear to mankind. Their Chief never shows himself now, though he did do so to some of the prophets of old.

“ These spirits, being powers of darkness, choose the night for their appearing, in order, among other reasons, to excite fear. We are therefore obliged to work at night, and to choose a place for holding the Adjuration, which must not be near any human habitation; for any noise

66 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

or strange intrusion or interference unbinds the Adjuration, the spirits immediately disappear, and the work is at an end for that night.

“ I have fixed my residence in this town, as there is in this neighbourhood, at a distance of about three hours’ walk, a mound called Tell Kasr Naby Suleyman, the Mound of the Ruins of the Palace of Solomon, and it may be that the books which I desire to see are kept beneath the Mound. I have already had meetings with all the minor groups; my next meeting must be with the two chiefs, Mareech and Shanhoresh; and when I shall have developed and displayed my strength over them by the power which I have received, then I shall be allowed to look into the books.

“ In order that you may be present with me, and be able to witness the appearance of these beings, though you will only be able to see them and not understand what they or I do or say, you must remember, as I have already told you, that these spirits make the greatest resistance, and try by every means in their power to break or unbind the Adjuration which has caused them to appear, and thus to prevent the exercise of any power over them; for this reason they assume various shapes and forms, sometimes hideous and terrible, and sometimes they present themselves under the semblance of an angel of light, of that of a good or holy man, or of a friend or relative, of one nearest and dearest, of an aged parent or a loving little one, in various situations, either of great danger,

68 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

for which they ask our help, or of joy in which they wish us to join ; but all this is only to force or to provoke us to give vent to our feelings aloud by voice and words, and thus to bring the Adjuration to an end.

“ It is for this reason that self-control is so absolutely necessary, and that you must for the time being, and during the Adjuration—as I am able to do—forget the world, with all its ties of home and friends, of love and sorrow, of pain and of joy. You must dismiss all sense of surprise and fear, and not allow yourself in any way to give vent to your feelings, and you must during the next few days before the Adjuration strengthen your force of will. Do not, I beg you, attempt to come with me unless you feel sure that you

will be able to withstand the heavy trials and sharp ordeals to which you may be subjected, for otherwise you would only hinder the work, and might do yourself serious harm."

"One question more, Sheykh Hassan," I said. "Can the spirits of departed human beings be summoned, and do they appear to their friends on earth?"

"No, never now," replied Sheykh Hassan, "some of the great prophets of old have raised the dead, and some of the spirits of the departed have been called upon and have appeared to man, but these have been exceptions, and are not and cannot be repeated now. The spirits of the departed are removed from all the influences of this world, and are now themselves being educated for their higher life. Those who

70 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

have led a blameless life, as far as the extent of the power and the light that was in them allowed them, and who have obtained the forgiveness of their God, are being prepared for a nearer view of, and a closer resemblance to Him ; they are beginning to enjoy the bliss of a holy, sinless, bright, eternal existence, to be more perfect and beautiful when their natural bodies, having become changed by becoming spiritualized, shall be eternally re-united to them, when they shall be able to hold and to enjoy holy and unceasing communion with those they loved on earth. These are the delights which will refresh the soul and the glorified and immortalized body—of which our Prophet speaks, which, he having to explain to his yet ignorant and worldly-minded followers,

had to be put under the metaphors which to them, in their hot and barren and almost lifeless sands and deserts, represented the highest form of bliss and perfection—beautiful gardens of trees and flowers, and continual streams of cool, living waters."

"I shall not," said the Sheykh, "leave my house till I go to the Mound of the Ruins for the Adjuration, but I shall be glad to see you at any time you may like to come."

During one of these visits I told Sheykh Hassan that I could not help remarking the sad and worn look which he always had on his face, and I asked him if I could do anything that would in any way help him, if not to entirely forget his sorrow, perhaps in some way to soothe his grief; and I begged that even if he did not think I could do

72 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

anything, that still he would tell me the cause of his trouble, which seemed so deep and heavy.

“ It forms,” he said, “ the whole history of my life and it would be tedious for you to hear it all”; but I assured him that that would not be the case.

CHAPTER V.

RASHEEDEH.

“I was born,” began Sheykh Hassan, “in the Province of Tunis, in Africa, in a small town called Walid, at a short distance from Kairwan the Holy. The only child of my parents, I was naturally very much petted, especially by my mother. My father was the 'Alem at the College attached to the Mosque in the town. He was a very learned man, having studied at the chief Muhammedan Universities, but principally at the Azhar

74 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

at Cairo, which is the leading University in Egypt, where he wrote a very valuable commentary on certain traditions of our faith.

“ The Azhar authorities offered my father a professorship in the high college, but he would not accept it. He sought, he said, neither fame, riches, nor honour, preferring to return to his native town of Walid, and to follow his simple life as 'Alem of the small college there.

“ Our home was a little house surrounded by a garden, a short distance outside the town. My father was very fond of gardening, in fact it was his only recreation. He was a man of very abstemious habits, being strict in his religious views; he neither smoked tobacco nor drank coffee, and was regular in all his duties. His one great

wish was to give me a high-class education, as he was anxious for me to succeed him in the professorship at the college, as he had succeeded his father before him.

“ My father’s manner being exceedingly kind and gentle, it was my delight to be taught by him, and I put my whole heart in my work. His lectures at the college occupied his time till about noon, every day of the week, except Friday ; the afternoons he devoted to me, and by the time I had attained my seventeenth year, I was able to attend and to understand his lectures at the college.

“ He had a vast knowledge of the Muhammedan religious traditions, of which he knew a great number by heart, and he made a point of telling me one every day while he was at work in his garden, so that I soon

76 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

found my knowledge of these traditions rapidly increasing.

“When I attained my eighteenth year my mother, in accordance with the custom in our country, desired me to marry; but I did not wish it, and in this my father encouraged me, thinking that it would be better for me to continue my studies for three or four years longer before taking upon myself the cares and responsibilities of married life.

“My father was, comparatively speaking, a poor man; he had but a small salary from the endowment of the college, and a small income accruing from some property he owned in the town. This, although enough for our simple wants, was insufficient for my father to save anything out of it.

“ My mother came from a wealthy family. She had two brothers : the elder, a rich merchant at Tunis ; the other, also a wealthy man, lived on his estate, which was about an hour’s ride from our house.

“ I knew but little of my Uncle Yussef in Tunis, for I had been at his house only once in my life, and then only for a very short time ; and he had not paid a visit to our town for many years. He was a busy man, and could seldom spare time to be away from his business.

“ My other uncle, Omar, I saw very frequently. He had two sons, Mustaffa, who was two or three years older than myself, and Ali, who was about my age. Their education had been much neglected ; and in order to make up for lost time, they came to our house every afternoon, and my

78 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

father gave them an hour's lesson, and I did what I could to help them on.

“ I liked Mustaffa very much ; he was always kind and obliging, and we soon became close friends ; and had he been my own brother I could not have loved him more. He took an interest in his studies, and worked hard ; but, being naturally slow, he made but little progress.

“ His brother Ali was, on the other hand, very clever, and could, whenever he chose to do so, learn his lessons without an effort. Quick to appreciate his subject, he soon mastered it ; but he did not care for ‘learning,’ as he called it. He hated books, and much preferred to spend his time in the bazaars and in the shops. He said that he was never made for an ‘Alem ; business, as he called what we

thought loitering from one market to another, was more in his line. He and I never got on well together, and although we saw one another every day, yet each was reserved in the presence of the other; for we had no tastes in common. We had neither of us any real ill-feeling toward the other, but, do what I would, I could not help having an uncomfortable and altogether unaccountable feeling of dislike towards him. It is one of those strange feelings akin to aversion to certain persons or objects which we sometimes have in spite of ourselves, feelings which we can never quite overcome. Mustaffa, however, made up for all his brother's shortcomings, and I was never happier than in his company.

“When I was about nineteen years old a

80 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

new *Kadi*, or judge, was appointed to our town. He was a native of Tripoli, but had resided in Tunis for many years. He had an only child, a daughter, whom he was anxious to bring up in a manner very different to that in which it is the custom to educate women in our country; he determined to give her a good education, more especially as the girl had from her earliest years shown a great liking for reading and for study; and, as she grew up, she often expressed a desire to be taught the higher branches of knowledge, a wish quite foreign to the nature of women in our country, and who are rarely taught even to read or to write.

The *Kadi* wished my father to undertake the education of his daughter, and more especially to instruct her in the

Kur'an and in Arabic grammar, and in literature.

" My father thought that, as his time was more limited than mine, it would be best for me to undertake the charge, and that the girl would probably not be as shy to receive instruction from me as she would be from a man of his age.

" I felt a little hurt, at first, at being appointed to such a task. I was aspiring to the post of assistant Alem at my father's college, a post that I hoped to get soon, and I thought the position of tutor to a little girl far below my dignity and attainments. Still, as it was my father's wish, I could not refuse, but set to work at once.

" Rasheedeh—for that was her name—was a pretty girl of about twelve years of

82 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

age when she first came to our house, which she did regularly every day an hour before noon, about the time that I returned from the morning lecture at the college, and remained till late in the afternoon, when a servant was sent from her father's house to fetch her home. She was just able to read and write in a simple form, and I now had to begin the higher branches of study with her.

“I very soon began to take a great interest in my pupil ; she showed great attention, and worked very hard, and was most painstaking and always ready to learn. She had great talent, and an excellent memory ; and I felt that before very long I should have no cause to be ashamed of my pupil and of her acquirements.

“ Three years passed, and Rasheedeh was developing into a very beautiful girl ; and her ways and manners told how carefully she had been brought up at home.

“ My two cousins frequently attended the lesson in the afternoon, Mustaffa listening very attentively to all we said, hoping thereby (as he said) to improve his small knowledge ; but Ali, I think, came merely to stare at Rasheedeh. He, however, always behaved very respectfully, and often brought Rasheedeh a bunch of flowers, which he said he grew on purpose for her, and which he always offered to her with some complimentary remark. It was evident, I thought, that she had made an impression upon him, and he was trying to win her affections. She, however, so far as I could judge, did not in any way encourage him,

84 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

and he, I thought, behaved more coldly to me and suspected that I was in his way; but he never said anything to me about it.

“One day, soon after Rasheedeh was fifteen years old, she told me that her father had decided that she was not to come to our house for her lessons any more; that he considered she was now too old to sit unveiled in the presence of men, and that after the week was over he wished her to stop at home and take her lessons there, from behind a *sûtra*, or high screen.

“I was very sorry to hear this, but I felt that it was the right thing, and in accordance with our religious laws and customs, by which a female is forbidden to be unveiled in the presence of anyone except her near relations. Rasheedeh had made rapid strides during the last year in all.

branches of literature, and her winning ways and simple but well-bred manner made a great impression on me. She was now a full-grown girl (girls in the East are full-grown at thirteen) perfect in form and figure, and very beautiful ; and I could not help feeling more than ordinary interest in her. This interest soon grew into affection, and this affection, I soon discovered, became deep and earnest love; and I could not, though I tried to do so, hide this fact from myself. Yes, I loved Rasheedeh, but I hardly dared to hope that she could ever be my wife. Her father was rich, and he would never accept so poor a man as I was for a son-in-law, and neither my father nor I possessed, much less could we obtain, the large sum of money which her father would require as a dowry for her.

86 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Wealth was not my aim ; my whole ambition was, in accordance with my father's hopes, that I should succeed him as the Alem of the College ; and my highest desire that I should be able to occupy the position in the same honoured and respected way that he had done for many years.

" The last lesson at the end of the week was a very painful one, both to Rasheedeh and to myself. I could hardly speak, I seemed to have a lump in my throat all the time, and Rasheedeh looked very much distressed and low-spirited. Her eyes, I could see, were often filled with tears ; the prospect of our parting was very hard. I might be asked to continue the lessons, but that would be under very different circumstances and in a more formal way, as I should not be able to see her face.

Neither of my cousins had come to the lesson that day, and so I took the opportunity of telling her of my love. I pleaded my cause with the warmth that real love alone knows—the earnest true love that sees itself reflected, though it does not for a while hear the echo of its voice. I told Rasheedeh that I expected there would be great difficulties put in my way on account of her father's position and wealth, and because of the large dowry* that he would require for his daughter, but that I believed, by her help and influence, these obstacles might be overcome.

“Rasheedeh listened quietly to all I said,

* In Oriental countries, the husband has to provide a dowry, which is paid to the wife's relations, who, if they be rich, give it to her, but if poor, they keep it for themselves.

88 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

and the blushes on her face, and her shy, gentle looks, told me that my love was not unreturned, that she shared my feelings, and that our love was, as one of our poets says, 'of the highest, of the noblest nature, one living, growing love, that was nourished by two true hearts, like some noble tree placed between two streams of living water, with its roots deeply imbedded in each.' Rasheedeh told me that she loved me and felt happy in the hope of becoming my wife.

"' You must ask my father,' she said, ' and when he consults me, you know what answer I shall give him. My father has promised not to accept a husband for me without my own wish and consent, and to leave me free to refuse or to accept a proposal as I think fit, though this is opposed

to general custom,* and so I shall accept no one but Sheykh Hassan. My father has agreed, and that by my particular wish, that I should continue my studies for another six months. We had better say nothing about this during that time ; when it is past, go and speak to my father, and we will hope and trust that all will be as we wish.'

"I thought this a wise plan, and I felt myself to be the happiest of men. Hope and trust—yes, that shall be my motto.

"I went with my father to the college the next morning, and, just before leaving, a servant of the Kadi brought a message

* In the East, parents frequently dispose of their daughters in marriage without consulting them—even telling them—until it has all been arranged.

90 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

requesting us to call at the Kadi's house on our way home.

“ ‘ I wanted,’ said the Kadi, speaking to me first of all, ‘ to thank you for the excellent way in which you have instructed my daughter. I am indeed astonished at the progress she has made, and I can only say that it reflects the greatest credit both on your knowledge and on your power of imparting it to others.

“ ‘ My daughter desires to pursue her studies a little farther, and I have consented to her doing so for another six months, but it must be at my house, and in the way that our laws and customs prescribe.’

“ Turning to my father, the Kadi said: ‘ I intended to have asked you to continue my daughter's instruction during this

period ; but as I know that your time is fully occupied, and you ought now at your age to have more rest, I will ask your son to do so for another six months.'

“ ‘ We are both very thankful to you,’ my father replied, ‘ for your kind expressions, and we shall always be happy to be of service to you. My son will continue to give instruction to your daughter, and I have every confidence that he will acquit himself of his duties to my entire satisfaction.’

“ The Kadi, who was known to be a man of rather miserly habits, handed to my father a small purse which he wished him to accept for me, not as payment for my work, for he would not offend me by offering any payment, but simply as a mark of his esteem. The purse contained one *Keess*, a sum equivalent to about five

pounds sterling. This was the Kadi's token of esteem for more than three years' work. But I did not feel at all disappointed, as Rasheedeh's love was more than sufficient compensation for all that I had done, or ever could do for her.

"I went to the Kadi's house one morning at the beginning of the following week, and was shown by a negro slave into a room which was partitioned off on one side by a high screen of lattice work. He told me to sit down on the divan which was near the screen, and that Rasheedeh would be on the other side in a few minutes.

"'I am ready to begin, Sheykh Hassan,' she said, in a low sweet voice but which had that morning a peculiar tone of sadness in it. 'I should like our subject to-day to be the various definitions of the words "hope"

and "trust" as given by some of the great grammarians and poets.'

" You know," said Sheykh Hassan to me, " how rich our language is, and how full it is of metaphors, and also of the great difference that exists between the Arabic spoken by the uneducated people and the refined language of literature. We could therefore exchange expressions of devoted affection without the fear of being understood by the negro, who was in the room with me during the whole time that the lesson lasted. He tried to listen to what we were saying, but as it was beyond his comprehension, he grew tired of it, and leaning his head against the divan, he went fast asleep.

" ' I chose these two words as the subject for to-day,' said Rasheedeh, ' because I

94 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

wanted to tell you what happened during this last week, and to assure you of my unchanging love for you.

“ ‘ You must no doubt have noticed the marked attention that your cousin Ali paid me during the time that I came to your house for my lessons. I naturally knew what he meant, but my feelings never reciprocated his sentiments, for, long before you spoke to me, my affections were not my own, even though I did not show that such was the case. Ali never said anything, but waited for some mark or sign of encouragement, which I could not and did not give. His father came to my father a few days ago, and asked for my hand in marriage for his son Ali. He said that he was ready to provide the dowry even to any sum that my father would like to name, that

he would provide us with all the necessary means, that being an old man and having but two sons, they would, in the ordinary course of nature, before very long, succeed to his property, which was a large one, and which would be divided equally between them, and that, as his family was one of good position, he hoped that his offer would not be refused.

“ ‘ My father,’ Rasheedeh continued, ‘ replied that he, on his part, was much pleased with the offer, and would accept the proposal, but that, having promised not to engage his word in such a matter until he had first consulted his daughter and obtained her full consent, he could only give his answer after having spoken to me. My father told me about it the same evening, and said that he thought it a very good

96 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

offer, and he desired me to think about it. I told my father that I was prepared to give my answer at once, and that it was a decided "No." I could not, nor would I, accept the offer. I also said that I had frequently seen Ali at your father's house, and that though I had a great esteem for him and for his family, yet I would not be his wife. I begged my father not again to refer to the subject, as it would only be painful to me. My father said he did not wish to control my feelings in the matter, but asked me to think about it for a few days. I told him last night that nothing could alter my decision, and he said he was sorry, but he would keep his promise and would not talk about Ali again.

" 'So you must not,' she said to me,

‘feel at all anxious if you hear anything about this from your cousins. Poor Ali, I am indeed very sorry for him. His father said that he was deeply in love with me, and that a refusal might prove of serious consequence to him, as he was very passionate and took things to heart. I must confess I like Ali; but my regard for him is different to the love I bear for you, Sheykh Hassan. I believe he is sincere and earnest, and that his abrupt and passionate manner covers much that is good and true. You may,’ she added, ‘I know you do, think differently; but Ali seems to me the better of the two brothers, and if I were obliged to choose between them Ali should certainly have the preference.’

“Poor Rasheedeh, she could little judge,

and was, without wishing to be so, unjust to Mustaffa, in whom I have always had, and still have, every confidence.

“ I was about to renew my expressions of affection to Rasheedeh when the negro woke up, and we had to resume our grammatical forms and to convey our meanings by proverb and metaphor. Our watchword was always to be—‘ Hope and Trust.’

“ I saw my cousin Mustaffa that afternoon, and he told me about Rasheedeh and Ali. He said that Rasheedeh’s decided refusal of his brother had made Ali almost beside himself ; that he intended to leave his home at once and to go to Susa, on the sea coast, to join some cousins who were merchants there. He had already thought of going to Susa, but after a few months. Rasheedeh’s answer, however, had now de-

termined him to do so immediately, and he intended to leave in a few days.

“Ali came to bid us farewell, and asked to speak to me alone for a little while. I knew instinctively what he intended to say, and felt awkward to meet him alone. He said he had taken Rasheedeh’s refusal very much to heart, but that that was his fate—it was so decreed. He must submit, and could only wish her every prosperity. ‘I believe I now know,’ he said, ‘the reason, though I but half suspected it before. It is you, I feel sure, who have won her heart, and I wish you every happiness. Your secret—if I be right—is well hidden with me; and if I can ever do anything for you, you will always find me ready.’

“His manner and tone were, I thought,

100 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

both reproachful and sarcastic ; and it was a relief to me—I could not help it—when he was gone.

“ The six months during which it was arranged that Rasheedeh should continue her lessons were almost at an end, and she and I agreed that a few weeks should be allowed to pass after that, and that then my father should call on the Kadi and speak to him about us.

“ A few weeks after the lessons to Rasheedeh had ceased I told my mother that I was now willing to carry out her wishes.

“ ‘ You wished me to marry about three years ago,’ I said. ‘ I refused at that time because I desired to continue my studies ; but I am now willing to do as you wish.’

“ ‘ I am glad to hear you say so, my son,’ she replied. ‘ I should like to see

you settled and happy before I die, and your father has the same desire. I shall start for Tunis without delay to your uncle Yussef there, and will choose the nicest of his daughters for my son.'

" 'No, no, mother,' I answered, 'I agree to marry, but it must be the girl I love.'

" 'And who can that girl be ? ' asked my mother.

" 'The Kadi's daughter, Rasheedeh ! ' I said.

" 'Oh, my son,' my mother replied, 'why would you marry a stranger ? Besides, the Kadi will not agree to give his daughter to a poor man like yourself. This will only cause you grief and sorrow, as it did your cousin Ali. Do not think of her. I will go to your uncle at Tunis. He will not

refuse to give you one of his daughters ; and as he is rich, he will give her a large dowry instead of asking you for one.'

" ' This can never be, mother,' I said. ' It must be Rasheedeh—no one else.'

" My father, too, to whom I spoke that evening, felt very hopeless about the matter ; still, he would, he said, call on the Kadi and do his best. He did so the next morning at an early hour to ensure a private interview, and said to him, ' I have come to ask you for something that is most precious, most valuable.'

" ' There is nothing that I can consider too precious or too valuable for you,' said the Kadi, in reply, ' and you shall have it even if it be all I possess.'

“ ‘ Your kind words encourage me to speak,’ said my father. ‘ I have come to ask for the hand of your daughter Rasheedeh for my son Hassan.’

“ ‘ But will you,’ said the Kadi, ‘ be able to provide the dowry that I should require for my daughter, for I should never consent to allow her to marry a man who could not furnish the necessary sum of money?’

“ The Kadi named a very large sum, which was far beyond our means or anything that we could possibly raise; and my father tried to make the Kadi reconsider his answer, but this he refused to do.

“ I quite expected what the Kadi would say, yet I felt very much disappointed and miserable when I was told the result of my

father's interview. We all saw how impossible it would be for us to obtain such a large sum of money ; and things looked very hopeless.

"Rasheedeh several times, under the form of a grammatical question, sent me messages of love and hope, but the disappointment and anxiety began to tell upon my health. I could neither eat nor drink, and my sleep was restless and unrefreshing.

"My father and my mother were both greatly alarmed and distressed, and my father went to the Kadi once more. 'You must,' he said, 'forgive an old man's distress and anxiety for his only son ; but Hassan is ill and miserable, and will not listen to any argument or advice, and I now come once again to beg you to reconsider your answer about Rasheedeh.'

“‘I had indeed made up my mind,’ said the Kadi, ‘that my daughter should marry a rich man; but I will agree to accept Sheykh Hassan—that is, if my daughter also consents—if you give me a dowry of one hundred *keess* for her (about £500). This is about one third of what I asked before; and this is my last word.’

“‘*Allah Kareem*, God is gracious,’ said my father, ‘and He will help.’

“My father told us of the Kadi’s last and firm decision; but we still felt how hopeless the case was, as even that reduced sum was beyond our limited possessions. My mother said there was only one resource, she would try to get the money from her brothers. Mustaffa’s father was wealthy, and so was my uncle in

Tunis; and they might both be willing to help.

“I had till then not said anything to Mustaffa about Rasheedeh. I tried to do so several times, but an awkward shyness always prevented me. I had great confidence in him, and always told him everything; but somehow I put off telling him about Rasheedeh from day to day. I could not keep it from him any longer now, and I was very much pleased to find, when I told him, how deeply he sympathised with me. He congratulated me very warmly on my good fortune in winning such a girl as Rasheedeh, whom, he said, he highly admired and respected, and he was happy to think that, though it had not been so ordained that she should become his sister by marrying his brother, still she would become the

wife of his cousin, who was dearer to him than his own brother. The money difficulty would soon be overcome, as his father would willingly give it, and would also feel very happy in the good fortune of his nephew. Mustaffa said he would speak to his father, but he was sure persuasion was not needed.

“ My uncle gave my mother part of the money ; he would, he said, have given her the whole sum, but he thought that she ought to go to Tunis and see her brother there, as he, too, would no doubt help us by giving the rest of the required sum ; and, if he did not, she should come to him, Mustaffa’s father, again, and he would let her have it.

“ My good fortune was now in the ascendant, and all seemed bright and

108 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

happy. My mother went to Tunis, and my uncle there gave her what was still wanting to make up the amount of the dowry. He also gave her ten *keess* for the wedding expenses, and he sent me very affectionate messages and presents of clothes and furniture. He would, he said, have come himself, but business prevented him.

“ My father went to the Kadi soon after my mother returned from Tunis; in a day or two the arrangements were all completed, the necessary documents drawn up, and the wedding day was fixed.

“ The Kadi made a great feast, which lasted three days and three nights, as his position required him to do so. His house was thrown open to rich and poor, servants were stationed in the various streets to

invite, almost to compel, people of every class to come to dinner or to supper. Singing men and women, musicians, buffoons, jugglers, dancers, story-tellers, were all employed to enliven the festivities.

“ My father entertained the students and the people connected with the mosque and college. My cousin Mustaffa helped us in making the preparations, and he worked hard in decorating the house, and especially the rooms set apart for me—for we were, as is our custom, to live in my father’s house.

“ Mustaffa was the most perfect of groomsmen, master or director of the wedding-feast, as we call a bridegroom’s best man. Nothing was to him a trouble that could, in his opinion, contribute to my happiness.

110 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

“ The wedding procession at midnight from the Mosque to the Kadi’s house, and then to ours, was a very grand one; and numbers of torch-bearers went in advance of it through the streets, calling upon the people to be ready to meet the bridegroom and the bride; and along each street through which we passed hundreds of men and women joined the procession, each carrying a lamp or candle, in token of good-will and kind wishes.

“ Rasheedeh and I were married, and our love and affection grew day by day. Our days passed very happily. We always sat together in the afternoon in the garden, to listen to a new religious tradition that my father told us, or to talk about the works of some of our great writers.

“ A child was born to us about two years

after our marriage, a little boy, who had large dark eyes, and who was also in other ways very like his mother. We named him Ahmad Mustaffa, after my father and my cousin.

“ Shortly after Ahmad’s birth my father caught a severe cold, and to my infinite sorrow was taken from us. I felt his death very deeply, but I had to bow to the decree of the Almighty—Whose we are and to Whom we must all return—and to comfort and to take care of my mother.

“ I was appointed to my father’s place, as the members of the college and the students all desired it, as I had, during the time that I was assistant ’Alem, given them satisfaction.

“ The Kadi, Rasheedah’s father, soon

112 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

after this, was appointed to a higher post in another part of the province, at a great distance from Walid, and he left before long for his new place.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NIGHT OF SORROW.

“ OUR life was an uneventful one ; my mornings were regularly occupied at the college, and I spent the afternoons in our garden with Rasheedeh and our little boy. In the evening I generally prepared my lecture for the next day, or worked at a book that I was writing on Muhammadan religious observances and traditions, and in which Rasheedeh helped me a great deal. My mother usually sat with us and did some

work in sewing or embroidery. She it was who managed our small household, looking after its wants and adding to its comforts (the wife, according to Eastern custom, does not interfere in home duties while the mother is alive). We kept only one servant, a young negro woman, who did the kitchen work, for we lived in a simple way and our wants were small. Our little Ahmad was a very bright clever boy—and he talked, when barely three years old, more like a child three times his age.

“ My cousin Mustaffa came to see us very frequently. He was devoted to the child, and played with him for hours together, and the boy, too, loved his big cousin very much, ‘ Uncle Taffa’ as he called him. At four years old he could read his letters and spell words of one

syllable, and while Rasheedeh and I were very fond of him, my mother almost worshipped him, for he was a most affectionate and sweet-tempered child, and had very winning ways.

“At about this time my uncle, Mustaffa’s father, was called to his rest. Mustaffa seemed overwhelmed with grief; but, like a good Muhammadan, he resigned himself to the Divine will, calling to mind the words of our Prophet—on whom be peace!—‘Death is a cup of which every creature must drink.’

“Mustaffa lived with us for seven or eight weeks after his bereavement, and until his brother Ali came from Susa to arrange the division of their father’s property. I was very sorry to part with Mustaffa, but I thought Rasheedeh seemed

116 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

rather pleased. He took up too much of her time, she said, and thought him too obtrusive in his manner.

“ Poor Mustaffa, I do not think that Rasheedeh ever understood him, and if she could only have done so in the way that I did, she would not have had that peculiar shyness in his presence which it was impossible not to observe. I hoped, however, that Mustaffa’s kind feelings would make her think better of him in time; but I never alluded to her coldness towards him, for she did not refer to it herself, and I thought that it arose more from a peculiarity of manner than from any real feeling of dislike.

“ Ali came to see us several times after his arrival at Walid. Mustaffa kept his share of the property in landed estates, and

purchased his brother's portion, as the money was more useful to Ali for business purposes. Ali and his cousins were leading merchants at Susa, and were in consequence much respected. He had become a very handsome man, tall and well-built, and in marked contrast to his brother Mustaffa, who was short and thin, although, like many small men, he was very strong. Ali brought us a number of presents, and made himself very agreeable ; he and Rasheedeh were great friends, and he seemed quite to have forgotten his old disappointment, and talked of his life in his adopted town, which he said he liked very much. It was a place full of business, being an important port and very different to our small, quiet town. He was not married, and did not intend to marry for some time to come. He stayed

with Mustaffa for a couple of months, and then left to return to Susa.

“A day after Ali’s departure some business called me to a neighbouring town, where I had to stay all day, but I expected to return the same night. The town was in an opposite direction to Susa, or I might have gone that part of the journey with Ali the day before. Before leaving I saw my cousin Mustaffa, and told him where I was going, and asked him to go to my house in the course of the day to see if my mother or Rasheedeh wanted anything. I told him, too, that I should return the same night, three or four hours after sunset; that he should look in again about that time to see if I had returned, and, if not, that he should stay there all night, as my mother might feel

nervous or timid if neither of us were in the house, and Mustaffa promised he would do so.

“ My business occupied me the whole day till late in the evening, but as I did not wish to sleep away from home, I determined to return home that night, and I arrived at my house about four hours after sunset. It was a dark, cloudy night, there was no moon, and the wind was blowing a sirocco from the south, which made the air feel heavy and oppressive.

“ I came up to the front door of my house and knocked, though I could have let myself in, without knocking, but knowing how eagerly my arrival was looked for, I formed a picture in my mind of Rasheedeh and the others rushing to the door to receive and to welcome me. But, to my

astonishment, no one answered my knock ; I knocked again, still no reply ; once more, but no answer. I pushed open the door ; the passage was quite dark ; contrary to custom there was no lamp in it.

“ There was a strange indescribable stillness about the house, which was the more marked because so totally unexpected. My heart at once misgave me, and seemed to stop with a sudden thud ; a strong nervous shudder came over me, and the perspiration in cold, heavy drops ran down my face. I felt alarmed, in spite of myself.

“ ‘ Rasheedeh ! Rasheedeh ! ’ I cried, as I walked along the passage ; but the walls only echoed my voice. ‘ Mother ! mother ! where are you all ? Mustaffa, are you here ? Mustaffa—Mother—Rasheedeh ! ’ I called,

but there was no answer, no sound, no voice; all was still—painfully silent—only a short hollow echo to my call.

“I felt as if my knees were bending under me—as if they had not strength to support my weight. I was almost paralysed with fear.

“I made a great effort, and rushed through the passage to the room in which we generally sat and spent our evenings. The door did not open easily; I had to push it hard, as a wooden stool had fallen across the threshold.

“When I entered the room, which was lighted up as usual, I saw a sight which—oh, my God ! my God !—made my eyeballs start out of their sockets with horror and alarm.”

Sheykh Hassan stopped for a few mo-

ments, drew his hand across his brows, and then held it over his eyes.

“The recollection of that awful night,” Sheykh Hassan resumed, “unnerves me still, and sends a thrill through my heart; but it is only for a moment, for to me the world, with all its passing joys, and with all its enduring sorrows, of which I have had a heavy share, is dead. I do not live in such joys and sorrows; they have had their time, but now like a dream they are gone. I live only in the hope of the higher, the more real life—the Mystical and Unchangeable—the Rohanee.

“God wills man’s fate. His decrees are just. There is no God but He, the All-Wise, the Compassionate, the Merciful. To Him be all praise.”

After another short pause Sheykh Hassan

continued, “On one side of the room I saw, as I entered it, my dear mother’s body lying stretched out partly on the divan and partly on the floor, her head, her face battered in, her clothes—she was dressed in white—bathed in blood, and the floor near her saturated with it.

“At a little distance from her, but on the same side of the room, lay my little boy—little Ahmad—his eyes closed, looking as calm and peaceful as he did when he was asleep, and with his little hands clasped together. I ran to him and lifted him up in my arms, and though he was still warm, I found that his heart had ceased to beat, and that he breathed no longer. His head fell heavily on my shoulder, and then I saw a wound behind the ear made by a blow dealt with some heavy, blunt instru-

ment or club. One blow had killed my darling child, my only one—he was dead. The dear little innocent life had been cruelly taken away.

“I was afraid to look farther, and for some minutes I stood with my head and eyes fixed one way, afraid that I might find Rasheedeh lying there too; but I forced myself to do so and turned round to look; and, although the disordered state of the room proved that a struggle had taken place, my wife was not there.

“I rushed into the next room, there was nothing there; the room was undisturbed; then to my mother’s room; that, too, was untouched.

“I then went to the kitchen; the negro woman lay on the floor dead—stabbed to the heart. She held in her hand a wooden

spoon, with which she had been stirring the food for our supper, which was still cooking on the fire.

“ I went back to the room to my poor dear mother and my darling boy. I stood and looked at them for a little while, feeling like one dazed. I tried to grasp the meaning of what had taken place, but I was powerless to think. I felt as if an iron band were tightening itself round my head, and that my brain was all on fire. I tried to call out, but I could not do so at first--my tongue seemed tied and unable to act. At last I shrieked out once, and then again; but my voice sounded hollow, its very tone frightened me. I rushed out into the garden, and then into the road, and I shouted at the top of my voice. At last I heard the clatter of a horse’s hoofs. I

called again ; a voice answered at a little distance. I shouted once more. ‘ Who is it ? ’ answered a voice that I recognised as my cousin Mustaffa’s.

“ ‘ Mustaffa ! Mustaffa ! ’ I cried. ‘ Come quickly—come—come at once ! ’

“ ‘ What is it ? Who calls out in this way ? What is the matter with you ? What has happened ? ’ he asked, as he galloped up to where I stood.

“ ‘ Come quickly. Come—see ! Oh, God ! come, come ! ’ I said, as I almost dragged him off his horse and pulled him into the house, and then into the room.

“ Poor Mustaffa ! I shall never, never forget the look of anguish and of horror that came over his face as he saw the terrible sight in the room. He threw himself on the floor and cried like a child ; his sobs and wails

filled the house. ‘It is hardly two hours since I was with them, and they were all so well and happy,’ he said, as he beat his head and tore off the hair of his beard. ‘Why did I not come sooner? Why did I go away at all?’

“I took my little one in my arms once more. I tried to talk to him, to wake him up again. I thought once that he smiled at me, and that he began to breathe again; and I called out to Mustaffa that he was not dead, he was alive. I called him by name and talked to him; but my strength soon gave way, and I fell senseless on the floor.

“When consciousness returned I found that I was in bed. Mustaffa was sitting near me, and looking, as I thought, very ill and worn.

“‘Mustaffa,’ I asked, when I awoke and

looked around at the strange room, 'Mustaffa, where am I ? Why am I here ? '

" ' Do not be alarmed,' he said, ' you are in Sheykh Ibrahim's house—your assistant Alem. But, oh, my cousin, how happy I feel to see you open your eyes once more.'

" ' How long have I been here ; and why am I in bed ? ' I asked.

" ' You have been very ill,' he said, ' and were brought here about three weeks ago. But you must not speak just now ; you must keep very quiet, and we will talk again in a day or two.'

" Mustaffa told me the next day that at the dreadful scene in my house I had fallen senseless to the ground, and that he had tried, but in vain, to bring me back to consciousness. He told me that he went that night to the authorities and told them what

had happened, and in what a state he had left me, and that the Kadi and officers had at once gone with him to my house, to find that his heartrending story was only too true. The terrible outrage—so brutal, so cruel—made a very great sensation in the town and neighbourhood, and awakened a general feeling of sorrow and deep sympathy for me.

“I had never—so far as I knew—given offence to anyone, and nobody could make out the cause or reason of these awful murders. It was not for robbery or plunder, as nothing in the house had been touched. But the strangest thing of all was the disappearance of Rasheedeh. No trace whatever had been found of her, though the Kadi had caused the strictest inquiries to be made all over the district. The wells in

my garden, and those in the neighbourhood, had all been carefully searched, but without success. No clue whatever could be found as to what had become of her.

“ Some people thought, but only for a while, that she had overtaxed her brain with study, and that her mind had given way, and that in a moment of frenzy she had herself done these dreadful deeds, and was now in hiding somewhere, or had thrown herself into a well at some distance. But on further reflection it was seen that this could not have been the case, and that, besides other reasons, it was felt that no woman of Rasheedeh’s slight form and figure could have dealt the heavy blows that had been struck. Then, too, there were evidences of a struggle between Rasheedeh and some person other than my

mother, and it seemed evident that it was a man who had done these awful deeds.

“ Mustaffa said that by the request of the Kadi and my assistant Alem Sheykh Ibraheem, I was removed in my unconscious state to the house of the latter, as it was the one nearest to mine, and where I should be properly attended to. He told me, moreover, that the Kadi had himself given all the necessary directions for the funeral, which was attended by most of the inhabitants of the district. My mother and my darling boy were laid to their rest side by side in one grave. There was a general expression of sorrow, everybody felt it very much; the stoutest heart gave way. The students at the college were one and all deeply

grieved for me, and they determined to do their best to find out the author of this terrible tragedy ; they had gone to the various towns and villages in search of some mark or clue that would throw light on the matter, and, together with the authorities, had worked very hard, but till now all their efforts were fruitless, the mystery remained unsolved.

“ Suspicion, some people thought very justly, had fallen on my cousin Ali. He had, they argued, been disappointed with regard to Rasheedeh ; he had come back on a visit, had seen her very frequently ; and his former feelings of love had returned with more passionate force. Its hopelessness had produced feelings of revenge which he could not control, and this was the result. He left a day before I went away for

the day, knowing that I was going to do so. He only went as far as the neighbouring town—a short distance—had watched for and used his opportunity, and he was, they thought, the perpetrator of the horrible crime. The Kadi himself saw sufficient weight in these premisses to cause the immediate arrest of Ali, and he was now kept in jail in the town. All communication with anyone whatsoever was strictly denied him, and as our law ordains that nothing with regard to the examination of a suspected person or a criminal can be done, no evidence on either side be heard, but in the presence of the murdered party's nearest relative, the authorities were waiting till I was sufficiently recovered to take action in the matter.

“I must confess that I too suspected

that Ali had something to do with it, and Mustaffa thought so too, indeed his suspicions seemed stronger than mine, and he said that although Ali was his own brother, yet he would see that justice should be done, and that if guilty he should be punished. I did not, I said, look for justice, I did not seek for the punishment of the guilty—neither would bring my loved ones back again to me; but if I could only know what had become of Rasheedeh, I would resign myself to my bitter calamity.

“ I called upon the Kadi when I was well enough to do so, and asked him to let me have a private conversation with Ali, that perhaps I might induce him to confess to me what he had done.

“ The Kadi permitted me to do so, and I went down to Ali’s cell, a small room, or

rather hole burrowed in the ground, that looked more like a vault for the dead than a room for the living. He was in irons, his chains were so heavy that he could scarcely move. The place, though it was noon-day and the sun in full blaze outside, was so dark that I could hardly see his face, and the foul air and smell almost overpowering, and so strong was the feeling, even of the jailer, against him, that no light was allowed him, and only the coarsest food at long intervals. The Kadi wished him, though only as yet unconvicted and uncondemned, to feel as much as possible the strong hand of the law.

“ Muhammadan law and custom give, as you know, to the nearest relatives of the murdered person the right to pardon the criminal and substitute the payment of a

sum of money, called blood money, and a term of imprisonment for capital punishment.

“ I was allowed to have a light in Ali’s cell; my arrival had been announced to him, so that he expected me. His two weeks imprisonment in this awful dungeon had altered him so much that I scarcely knew him. He looked fully ten years older than when I saw him last, only about three weeks before. The sufferings, both mental and physical, that he had undergone by his solitary confinement, and the want of proper and sufficient food, and by the atmosphere of his wretched cell, must have been very great.

“ I told Ali that I had come to see him before the case was publicly entered into at the Criminal Court, to beg him to

tell me all, and I promised under solemn oath that I would forego my right to his punishment for the terrible crime and the injury done to me, that I would require no satisfaction, and that I would do my best to obtain his release, if he would but tell me what had become of Rasheedeh.

“Ali listened quietly to all I said, but his only reply was that he was quite innocent of the charge made against him, and that he could most clearly prove himself to be so. I begged, I entreated, but all without avail. Ali most persistently denied all knowledge of the matter.

“I went to the Kadi again and begged him to see Ali privately, and to induce him, if possible, to tell the truth. The Kadi did so. I was present at part of the interview. The Kadi told Ali that if he would confess,

he, the Kadi, would accept the waiving of my right to his punishment; but that if the case were once entered into and Ali found guilty, no mercy would be shown, and he would have to suffer the full penalty of his guilt.

“Ali remained obdurate, still asserting his innocence. He was therefore brought to the court in a few days, and the case opened before the Kadi.

“The prisoner in Oriental countries is subjected to a very strict examination, with the object of making him incriminate himself. Ali was questioned and examined as to where he had been on the day previous to and on the night of the murders, and his statement certainly did sound straightforward. He said that on leaving his father’s—now his brother Mustaffa’s house—he had gone to the neighbouring town

of Lubban, at a distance of about two hours ride, that he had gone straight to the house of the *Mufti* (the religious chief of the town), that he stayed there the whole day and following night, from the time of his arrival till the next morning, and that without once leaving the house, and that he had only heard of these awful murders the day after they had taken place.

“ The *Mufti* and his son, and with them several other witnesses, were sent for from the neighbouring town, and they one and all corroborated Ali’s statement.

“ The *Mufti* had had a special reading of the *Kur'an* at his house, in memory of a son that he had recently lost, several Dervishes were there, the reading commenced some hours before sunset, and

was kept up the whole night, and until late the next morning, and Ali had been there, sitting near the Mufti the whole of the time. He had dined with the Mufti and the company, and being tired went to sleep, reclining on the divan on which he sat near the Mufti. He had in fact not been out of their sight for more than a quarter of an hour at a time. This evidence being conclusive, Ali was immediately set at liberty.

“ ‘You are, I know, still unconvinced,’ he said to me, ‘and have some secret thought that I am the guilty man, but the day will come when you will know the truth. My sufferings have been very great, but I would gladly undergo them again, if I could but have the guilty party brought to justice.’

“ I must admit that I still believed that

Ali knew more than he chose to tell, and that, if he was not the evil doer, he knew who was, and Mustaffa too was of my opinion.

“The authorities after this did all they could, and continued the search; but it was all fruitless, nothing could be found.

“I, however, was not satisfied, but went about from place to place and made the most persistent inquiries for Rasheedeh; but without result, my untiring energy, during a long period, was all in vain. I could not find any trace whatever of her. I hoped against hope, but only to meet with bitter disappointment.

“I felt wretched and heart-broken, and I then prayed that God would take my life, which had now no further attraction for me. The sunshine of my life had gone for ever.

“My nearest and my dearest, they who had made my life so full of joy, so bright and happy, were all gone. All in one single night. All taken from me in the most cruel, the most heart-rending way. I left my home in the morning the happiest of men—wife, child, mother—all so dear and loving and good. I returned at night and found all gone. No wife, no child, no mother. My poor dear ones—and, oh ! such a cruel end. My cup ran over with joy and hope in the morning. In the evening it overflowed with sorrow and despair. ‘I cannot live—I do not want to live,’ I often cried. Death would relieve me of my incurable pain and grief, and I should rejoin my loved ones in the place where there is no more sorrow or parting and where tears are unknown.

“ My cousin Mustaffa did what he could to offer me comfort, but all in vain ; Sheykh Ibrahim, my assistant Alem, at whose house I was staying (I could not even go near my own, and Mustaffa wished me to go to his, but Sheykh Ibrahim insisted on my remaining with him), was most kind and attentive ; but nothing could for a moment make me forget my heavy grief, for no broken heart was ever restored by the most comforting of words.

“ I mourned long and deeply for my poor Rasheedeh. I often thought of the happy days we had spent together, of all her loving gentle ways, of the earnest conversation we daily had on the value of knowledge ; but I dwelt more particularly on one theme which often, almost every day, formed the chief subject of her

144 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

thoughts and talk—the future life, the life of the soul.

“God in His mercy made the pain and the sorrow I had undergone feel lighter in the contemplation of this glorious life to come; and more especially so when I thought that I should, when I entered it, meet my loved one again, and be able with her to learn more of the knowledge of that future life.

“I also thought on the mutability of all earthly things, on the emptiness of placing one's hopes on things of this world, which often only ended in sorrow and disappointment; and the more I thought of this, the more I desired to give myself up entirely to the study of the great knowledge, to throw aside as much as possible the mere earthly life and to enter into

contemplation of the higher, the truer life of the soul.

“I felt that, in order to do this as I should wish, it would be best for me to quit the busy world, and I therefore resolved to enter a *Khilweh*, a Muhammadan monastery or retreat for very strict recluses, and to choose one with the most austere and rigid rules; I should there be shut out from the world and from my fellow-men.

“I determined to join the *Khilweh* of the *Rohanee*, the Spiritual. There I should be secluded from the outward world and devote myself to study, to meditation and prayer, to the study of and meditation on the Knowledge of the *Rohanee*, on its great Power, and to prepare myself, if it be thus decreed to me, for the receiving of that Power.

“ My cousin Mustaffa tried to dissuade me from my purpose. He could not understand my feelings, and that my ordinary worldly life should cease through my loss of Rasheedeh.

“ I went to the Kadi and told him of my determination to resign the post of Alem at the college ; he reluctantly accepted my resignation.

“ I bade my friends and the students of the college farewell. It was a sorrowful scene, for we had all known each other for many years—some from my boyish days—and we little thought that we should ever part, and, least of all, under such painful circumstances ; but such was the Divine will, and we had to bow humbly to it.

“ Mustaffa arranged all my affairs, and I appointed him my agent to look after my

property and to collect the few rents. He did so regularly, and paid the amount to the Sheykh towards the support of the Khilweh.

“Before leaving Walid I went to my house once more, for the last time ; I had not been there since that terrible night. I did not go inside the house, but only to the garden, and I sat alone for a short while on the bench where I so often sat and loved to sit before with my beloved Rasheedeh and my darling boy. I thought of the bright and happy past, of the bitter sorrow of the present, and of the dark, the unknown future ; but such was my written fate—my predestiny. It was thus decreed. *Allah hu Akbar ; el hamdu l'Illah.* ‘God is the Greater ; praise be to God.’

“Mustaffa accompanied me as far as the

148 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Khilweh, which was about ten days' journey from Walid ; he felt the parting from me very much, and even after the door which was to separate us, perhaps for ever, was closed, I could still hear his sobs outside the walls.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MONASTERY IN THE DESERT.

“THE Khilweh was situated in the last range of the southern mountains of Tripoli, on the borders of the great desert, far from any town or village or human abode. It was placed almost at the bottom of a deep narrow ravine which separated two high mountains, the sides of which were very precipitous and rocky.

“The way down to the Khilweh in this rugged gorge was most tortuous—indeed, dangerous—over high rocks and boulders of smooth stone and flint, which stood in

solid masses on every side. The bright red stone intermingled with layers of flint of a grey-blue colour gave these rocks, in the daytime, in the full scorching blaze of a desert sun, the appearance of huge flames of fire surrounded by wreaths of smoke ; and at night they looked, and often seemed to me as I gazed at them from my cave, like an army of giant demons placed as sentinels to guard the valley.

“ These great fire-rocks, together with the ardent heat, made more intense by reflection from them, justified the name given to the valley—*Wady 'l-Laton*—‘ the Valley of the furnace.’

“ Apart from the hot dry blast of the desert simoom, which swept through the valley at frequent intervals, there was hardly a breath of air, the atmosphere was thick

and heavy, at night the closeness of the air made it feel very stifling, and the solemn stillness, undisturbed by any sound, not even of bird or beast, except at times the peculiar wail-like but grating cry of the large desert-lizard, gave the place the real seclusion which the inmates of the Khilweh sought. It was all bare and deserted ; there was neither tree nor shrub, nor beast nor bird, and except for the noxious reptiles which abounded in the valleys, the place was abandoned by every living thing—cut off from the living, moving world, so full of joy, and yet more of sorrow. It was desolate—dead, all in harmony with the sad torn hearts of those who came to hide themselves within the Khilweh's walls, and strove by so doing to make a blank of their former lives, to bury within its caves all

remembrance of home and friends, of happiness and grief, of love and hope ; whose desire and aim was to live as beings belonging to another world, beings whose self had been subdued, who had, as it were, become unselfed by the overcoming of the body and the triumph of the mind and spirit. They to whom neither day nor night brought change or rest ; who by long and oft-repeated fastings, vigils, and prayers, had made themselves impervious to any sense of cold and heat, of thirst and hunger ; who, like all the great and true recluses, had resigned all ties, all connection with the outward world, in order to contemplate, to the full extent of their capacity, the great power of the Rohanee, the spiritual over the natural, the eternal over the temporal ; in order to understand,

and to obtain, a knowledge of the mystical, the unseen, the unknown—that is to say, unseen and unknown to all human kind except those for whom it was ordained.

“ The Khilweh was composed of a number of caves—fourteen in all. One, the largest, was used as the *Jame'*, or small mosque, having a small minaret on its southern side, one belonged to the Sheykh of the Khilweh, and another near it was for the attendant ; these three were on one side. Opposite them were eleven caves placed one near the other, but separated outside by a wall about seven feet high on each side, so that the occupant of one cave could not see or hear that of another ; the walls were built in such a way that they all converged towards the mosque on the opposite side. Each of the eleven

caves was about twelve feet deep, six wide, and just high enough for a man to stand upright in. Its furniture was composed of two thin blankets, used for a bed and covering during the short broken intervals devoted to sleep, an earthenware basin and cup, and a jar filled every morning by the attendant from the spring of brackish water which trickled down at the bottom of the ravine.

“ The food consisted of a few dates and a thin loaf of bread, placed by the attendant in the cave each day, and, occasionally, a little olive oil or some boiled herbs were added to our meal.

“ When I entered the Khilweh there were, besides the Sheykh and the attendant, seven other inmates, so that we were ten in all. I was admitted as a *mureed*, or novice, in

which state I was to continue for two years. After that, and if I had shown endurance and continued in my desire, I was to receive the Covenant and then to proceed with my devotions, meditations and studies, for a period of five years, with the hope that the knowledge and power sought for would be revealed and given to me.

“ My new life and experiences were very irksome to me at the beginning. My thoughts would, at first, revert to the scenes of former days and to the world that I had left behind me ; but gradually these feelings were subdued, and I entered with patience and resignation into the life that I desired. My days and nights were fully occupied with my meditations and prayers, and I became reconciled to the strict rules and forms of the Khilweh.

“ I never saw the faces of my fellow ascetics, except those of the Sheykh and the attendant. We all met at the mosque cave five times a day for prayer—the early morning, the noonday, the afternoon, the evening, and the two hours after sunset prayers—as prescribed by our religion ; and every night at the midnight hour we assembled at the mosque to hear the Sheykh’s discourse on the subject of the Rohanee, but we always sat with our bodies bent low and our burnous-hoods over our heads, completely covering our faces ; and, beyond the customary salutation of ‘ Salaam ’ as we entered, we never spoke.

“ When prayer was over I returned to my cave to repeat the divine attributes, and then to think on the subject of the Sheykh’s last lecture, till the call for prayer by the atten-

dant, from the small minaret, summoned me again to the mosque ; and when the last evening prayer was said, I returned to my cave, and the Sheykh came to explain to me the subject of his last lecture, and when he left and I had repeated the ninety-nine names of the Creator, I lay down on my blanket for a few hours repose, to wake up again at midnight for the Sheykh's lecture.

“ My fastings were very frequent, and the better to subdue the body, I often refused all nourishment for very many hours together, and my sleep was generally restless and broken. Many a time the angels of darkness would try to draw me from my resolves, tempting me to return to the world ; and although I did not, at first, see them in form, I often heard their low mutterings of fiendish hate and mockery.

“I nearly sank under the great strain, both mental and physical; but the spirit triumphed at last, and the body was brought into subjection.

“It was not an uncommon occurrence for a mureed to break down and to be called to his rest during the great trial of his novitiate; and twice during my first two years, and several times again after that, did the attendant call on us from the minaret to come to help lay in the grave all that was mortal of a brother mureed whose great self-inflicted privations and mental and bodily struggles had broken the thread of life, and who had thus been invited into the abode of rest, there to partake in a fuller, deeper way, unhampered by all bodily pain or sorrow, of that high knowledge of the future life, a small

portion of which he had striven to gain on earth.

“ We used to carry the remains of our brethren along the narrow pathway down the ravine to the burial-place belonging to the Khilweh, where the small uninscribed tomb-stones marked the graves of many who had succumbed during their days of probation.

“ These funerals at night, and without lights—for no light, except at the mosque, was ever allowed at the Khilweh—were each a sad experience, for the grave was dug and the departed laid in it after the last evening prayer had been said—were each a reminder of the instability of human life, and taught us that God alone is everlastingly unchangeable.

“ When I had completed my two years

novitiate I received the Covenant which bound me to the Mystery and to the Power that I desired to receive, and at the end of the fourth year I was permitted to receive the revelation of the Name, and by this revelation to enter into a participation, in a gradual way, of the Knowledge and Power of the Rohanee.

“I pursued my studies at the Khilweh for another year, and then I felt directed to leave the Khilweh and my country and to come here to Syria to increase my knowledge by special work. Some of our Order are, at times, thus directed to go into the world again to further their researches.

“I wrote to my cousin Mustaffa. It seemed strange to address him again, not knowing if my letter would find him still alive, and I asked him to make the business

arrangements for me and to meet me at the nearest port, as I did not wish to go back to my native town.

“He very kindly came and saw me off on board a ship bound for Syria. I scarcely knew him: he had grown so much older-looking, and his face seemed very hard, and was marked with deep lines.

“I have now been here for a few months, and receive from him the rents that he collects from my little property. A portion of it is enough for my wants, the rest I devote [to those who stand in greater need of it.”

Such was Sheykh Hassan’s account of his own strange sad history. I could now well understand the settled look of sadness on his face, and I felt, too, that no words, however well meant and well ex-

pressed, could in any way offer more than mere sympathy, but which, even at its best, could never do away with grief like this.

“I have tried,” said Sheykh Hassan, as I was about to leave him, “to forget all the past, and I have long ago forgiven the one, whoever he may be, who has been the cause of my sorrow. My hopes and desires are centred in one thing alone—the spiritual, the enduring. Oh ! if men would but seek this spiritual, this enduring life ! but most of them live now as if the highest aim in life were nothing else but first the cultivating of their passions, and then the striving to satisfy them, as if the eating of the most delicate of food, the wearing of the finest of dress, but, above all, as if the nurturing of, and then the indulging in, still greater passions, were the highest form,

the noblest end, to be attained. In this they seem to concentrate all their hopes and wishes ; to them it is their body alone that lives, as if there were nothing else, as if they wished for nothing beyond this mere short earthly life ; and they not only seem to forget, but they deem it far beneath their notice, too absurd, impertinent, ill-timed, and out of place, to be reminded that each day brings this bodily life nearer to its end. In the words of one of our great preachers, 'they pass by the tombs of their predecessors, and do not fear the assault of destiny and destruction, as if others alone were made to depart out of the world, and they themselves, each one in his own individual person, must of necessity remain in it.' They will not think of the higher life, they will not remember that

the flesh returneth to its dust, that the body is limited to space and to time, but that the soul is hedged in by neither ; that the body must cease to grow, but that there is no limit to the expansion of the soul ; that it is the soul that lives and does not end with the decease of the body, but rather that its unenclosed, its free, its more extended, its more earnest life, begins when the body dies ; that it is the body that must be spiritualised—mark this well—and not the soul that will be embodied ; and that when the body is reunited to the soul it will be so in a spiritualised form ; to be able to enjoy, as one with the soul, that higher and nobler and unending, but ever-growing, ever-developing spiritual life—even by a continual contemplation of the unbounded attributes of God, and of a nearer

approach to Him by understanding more the beauty of His perfectness.

“ This will be the goal of the future life of man, together with all the other glorified beings, in the presence of the Almighty Creator from whom they have sprung and in whom they will live throughout Eternity.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADJURATION.

“ I HAVE arranged,” said Sheykh Hassan, when I called on him again, “ to hold the adjuration in two days from now, on Monday night ; the eve of Tuesday and that of Thursday are those generally chosen for holding meetings and communication with the spirits. We shall begin the adjuration about four hours after sunset. We must start from here at about an hour before sundown, so that we have sufficient time to reach the mound of the ruins and to rest

ourselves there awhile before we commence. I shall want you to take charge of the incense which we have to use. We are obliged to use certain forms in these adjurations when we summon the spirits, and though we do this by the power entrusted to us, and they are obliged to obey that power, yet are we bound to show that we do not sit in judgment on their actions, but that we respect them even though they be not in the right way, and that we know and believe that it is to their Creator alone that they are answerable for their deeds.

“ The offering of the incense is done in two ways, either by burning it into smoke, or by dissolving it and then sprinkling it in a liquid form. When offering it as a smoke, it is necessary to keep it burning

during the whole time of the adjuration. As a liquid, it is sprinkled three times, once at the beginning of the adjuration, and twice afterwards. You must be careful not to cease putting the incense gradually on the fire, but, above all, you must avoid speaking to any of the beings that might appear before you, and, however much your sense of sympathy or fear may be excited, you must not give vent or expression to your feelings—you must not speak or call out. I shall not be able to see you till the appointed time, for I must, till then, keep in retirement for meditation and prayer.”

On entering Sheykh Hassan’s house on Monday afternoon, I could not help observing, as he came to the door to receive me, how much his looks had altered during the last two days. The lines on his face had

become deeper, his eyes looked more than usually bright and feverish, and they had sunk very deep into his head, and the nervous twitchings of his mouth and eyebrows were more frequent, all indicating the great mental struggles through which he had passed.

His preparations were all complete, and he was ready for the journey. There was a little bundle containing a few small and thin flat loaves of bread and a handful of olives. This was the provision for our supper and morning meal. Also a small jar, to which a cord was attached for drawing water out of the well, which he said was near the Mound of the Ruins of the Palace.

“This,” he said, handing me a small parcel, “contains the incense which is to

be used to-night. It is composed of a gum gathered from the wild almond tree, mixed with some soft gum, which exudes from the olive tree, and some aloes wood. These are the three ingredients that have been used in great ceremonies, and the perfume is fragrant and harmless. The charcoal in this small basket will be enough for the work to-night. You must take special care of the incense and the charcoal, as we cannot do without them."

It was a beautiful evening, as evenings generally are in the autumn in that part of the East. During the first part of our journey we passed through some very beautiful valleys full of gardens and trees, from which we emerged into very wild, deserted country, the beginning of the Syrian desert, in which the ruins of the city of Palmyra

are still to be seen, utterly deserted except by the nomadic Bedouins who occasionally pitch their tents there.

We did not meet anybody after we left the cultivated valleys, and soon after the sun went down the night set in. The moon was five or six days old, so that we had sufficient light to see our way.

The country looked and felt most dreary; there was not a sound of any kind, though now and then the stillness was broken by the shrill bark of the Syrian jackal, or the mournful cry of the large grey desert owl. I began to feel nervous in spite of myself, as the night drew on. I was not exactly afraid, but the experience was a new one, and an involuntary shudder came over me at times, which I could not repress. I tried to make conversation with Sheykh Hassan,

172 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

but he seemed too much absorbed in his own thoughts to answer me, and beyond a short reply to my remarks, he said nothing, and in this way we walked on till about two hours after sunset, when we reached our destination.

The hill on which the mound of the ruins stood rose to about two hundred feet above the plain—nearly a quarter of a mile in length, and quite flat at the top. The mound looked like a huge grave, about one hundred and fifty yards long and fifty yards wide. It was perfectly bare, without a tree or shrub ; a few large stones and some broken pillars were all that was left of this ancient palace.

We placed ourselves at a short distance from the well at the foot of the mound, and, after resting for a little while, we ate our

supper of bread and olives, and quenched our thirst from the water of the well, which was sweet and cold.

Sheykh Hassan having repeated his prayers, made up a small fire with the charcoal, so that it should be a glowing one when required, and free from any noxious fumes.

The moon had already set; it was about four hours after sunset, and perfectly dark.

Sheykh Hassan said he was about to commence at once, and reminded me once more about the incense and the necessity of not giving way to fear.

We sat almost at right angles to each other, at a distance of a few feet, with my back to the mound. By the glow of the burning charcoal I could see Sheykh

174 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

Hassan's face distinctly and mark every expression on it. I could also look into the open space before us.

Sheykh Hassan gave me a sign to begin to put incense on the fire. He then rose, walked a few yards towards the south, then stopped and chanted in a low tone, loud enough for me to hear but not to understand what he said. He then returned and sat down, still chanting in the same low tone. He then rose, walked towards the east, returned; then towards the north and back, and then to the west, and then returned and sat down again.

I felt very nervous at first, but as he went on and nothing happened, my courage revived. This continued, I thought, for nearly an hour, when suddenly there appeared upon the ground a nearly horizontal

beam of pale light about thirty feet high. I could see into the depth of the ray, which was about fifty feet, and beyond that it was dark, the darkness made more intense by contact with the light.

The Sheykh at once rose up, and, holding out his right arm towards the light, which came up to within a few yards from where we sat—behind us, all was dark—he called out some names, and said some words of which I could only make out two—“Appear now.” This he repeated once, and sat down again and went on chanting. A few minutes after this I heard a rumbling noise, low but distinct; then I felt as if someone had tapped me on my head; then a blow from a substance which fell on my head and then on to my knees, and on looking I found it was a bone; then another

similar blow, and these increased till the noise sounded like the pouring out of a large number of bones on to a hard surface. They fell with the dull thud that such a substance produces. I could see and feel the shower of bones of various lengths and sizes fall on me and round me, and these were followed by a number of human skulls. Then a bleeding head, with a ghastly look upon its gashed face, was thrown at me. I could feel the warm blood trickling down on my left hand, near which it had fallen. These disappeared, and then I felt a cold slimy, moving sensation round my bare neck. It was a long serpent that had wound itself there, and was drawing its coils closer and closer, tighter and tighter, till I felt almost choked. It then uncoiled itself and brought its head, its neck puffed

out to the utmost, near my face, and darted its forked tongue, with a hissing noise, upon my lips. Terrified though I was, for the very sight of a serpent always unnerved me and filled me with loathing, I still did not move, but went on putting the incense on the fire. The whole place then seemed alive with reptiles of all sizes and kinds. One, more especially, filled me with great horror ; it was a short thick snake, with a large head, as big as that of a small monkey, covered with hair. It slung itself across my shoulder and then jerked its head backwards and forwards against my cheek. I, however, kept my courage, and went on with the incense. Then I saw, looking straight before me, the form of a large animal approaching. It looked like a very large hyena, and walked very slowly for-

ward towards me, and then came up, and with a low growl it put its hideous mouth close to me, and I could feel its hot, rank breath, on my face. A minute later all these disappeared, and then shapes, uncouth, indescribable forms, resembling somewhat the human figure, filled the lighted space. A look of pain and of rage was on each awful face; the forms did not walk, but crept on their knees in a crouching manner, throwing dust over their heads as they moved onwards; they crawled past Sheykh Hassan and then by me. I felt rooted to the ground, and though my senses were at their clearest, yet I seemed to have lost all control over my limbs, except over my right arm and hand, with which I still put incense on the fire.

There were strange noises all round me,

but more especially from behind ; sometimes a low hollow laugh, that sounded more like a gurgling howl, close to my ears. I could not move ; my blood seemed to coagulate, and I dared not look behind.

These shapes vanished, and then there was a clanking noise as that of chained prisoners being led along. Two forms then approached in the same crouching way as the preceding ones, throwing dust over their heads ; and as they drew near, a strange pungent odour pervaded the air, and every nerve of my body was set into an indescribable tremor, and my whole frame quivered.

On approaching us more closely they stood up ; two tall strong men, perfect in form and shape, but dark in colour, and their faces were very repulsive—full of rage and hate. One of them sat down in front

of Sheykh Hassan, the other opposite to me. A cold shiver came over me when I saw his awful face, staring at me with his great glaring gleaming eyes, that told of anger, of hate, of malice, and revenge all mingled in one. He fixed his gaze intently on mine, and a horrid grin extended his hideous mouth from ear to ear, displaying his coarse irregular teeth, which gave him the appearance of a rabid and infuriated beast.

The form that sat before Sheykh Hassan rose up and sat down several times. The Sheykh never ceased chanting in a low tone. Finally, the two forms rose and retreated backwards in a crouching manner as when they came, and then disappeared in the darkness.

The light then disappeared for two or

three minutes, leaving us in total darkness. It then reappeared, pale, though brighter than the last, and covering the space as before. I looked at Sheykh Hassan; he had an eager and intent expression on his face. The ground, a few yards from where we sat, then opened, and three forms came out of the cavity, ordinary human forms, but with very pale faces, like the greenish-yellow pallor of a dead body, and with very sinister and gloomy expressions. They were dressed in black shirts of a rough sackcloth-looking material, which only reached to their knees, their necks, feet, and arms being quite bare.

They stood near to Sheykh Hassan, who several times stretched out his arm towards them, and brought it down with force, as if he were ordering them to carry out

his wishes. The forms made imploring gestures, but Sheykh Hassan remained unmoved. I could not understand what he said. I only heard the names "Mareekh" and "Shanhoresh," and "Must come," and whenever he said this, the forms cowered and bent low.

They then went slowly back to the opening in the ground, the noises that had been going on ceased, and all was still.

Suddenly I heard a loud shriek, the piercing shrill cry of a woman in pain and fear. It came loud and sharp through the awful stillness, and seemed for a while to vibrate in the air. I looked straight before me, from where the sound came. It was repeated, and sounded louder as it drew nearer, through the darkness on to the light. I then saw two tall strong men violently

dragging and pushing forward a female form. I could not see her face at first, for it was bent down towards the ground; but as they approached close to where I sat, they stopped, and she raised her head and looked at me.

It was my dear old mother's face, her very self, in form and look and feature; but she had a terrified expression, one of great pain and alarm, and as she came near me she held out her hands, imploring me to help her. I felt as if my heart-strings were breaking, to see my poor dear mother so cruelly treated by those brutal men. She drew nearer, and bent her head close to me. I could see plainly her pale frightened face and look of great anguish. I could feel her warm breath on my face, and I thought I heard her call me by

my name. At this very moment, as her face was close to mine, one of the men took hold of her by her grey hair, which was almost white, and dragging her backwards, threw her with a jerk on the ground. She took hold of him round his knees and lifted up her face to him with a look of intense agony, pleading for mercy.

The man, then, with one hand, hurled her from him, and, lifting up his other arm, was about to strike her on her head with his fist, when, forgetting all else, I saw only my mother and the arm so cruelly raised above her. I leapt forward towards the man. "Strike her if you dare!" I yelled in the intense excitement of the moment as I put out my hand to seize his arm. "You shall . . . !" But the next instant, and even before I could finish my sentence

or reach his arm, the men, the female form, the light, had all disappeared. There was no one present but Sheykh Hassan and myself.

The change was so sudden, that for some minutes I could not grasp the situation ; but I saw in a moment what I had done. I had given way, and by giving vent to my feelings I had broken the adjuration and stopped the work for that night. I was unable to control my feelings ; the trial had been a severe one, more than I could endure, and I had given way under it.

I did not know what to say to Sheykh Hassan. I was afraid and ashamed to speak to him. My tongue was hot and dry ; I could hardly speak, my breath was short and quick, my limbs trembled under

186 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

me, and I sank down on the ground and hid my face in my hands.

The moment the adjuration was broken Sheykh Hassan began to repeat the Divine Attributes. After a short period of silence he said to me, " You have been put to a very severe test, and it was beyond your power to keep yourself from giving way. It is only such as I, inured as I am to all feelings of surprise and alarm, to all sense of fear and pain, to whom everything of this world is as if it had not been, who can see these things unmoved. But this could not be expected of you, and we must be thankful that no harm has come to us. This has been so predestined, and we must bow to the Supreme will."

Sheykh Hassan's encouraging words were most welcome, and I felt grateful for

them. The adjuration had lasted two hours, but to me it seemed an indefinite time—I had seen and gone through so much.

We rested at the Mound for an hour or two, and then set back on our return journey to the town. I went with Sheykh Hassan to his house, and remained with him a short time. He told me that he would not leave his rooms till the next day, Wednesday, towards evening; he would fast till then; and, after sunset, would be ready to go to the Ruins of the Palace, and expect me then to accompany him. "You will, I know, have more courage," he said, "and we shall, I hope, meet with success."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEDOUIN ATTACK.

I LEFT my house in the afternoon with the intention of taking a short walk just outside one of the gates, but I was surprised, on getting into the market-place, to find that the whole town was in a state of great commotion. The shops were all shut. Some people were running to their houses in order to barricade themselves there; others were rushing to the large court of the mosque, where a great number of persons had already assembled; the gates of

the city were closed, and were guarded by some of the irregular soldiers and the police. Everybody I met was most excited, and talked of a massacre that was going to take place. I could not at first make out what it all meant. I thought that a general uprising of the Muhammadans against the Christians was intended, as they seemed to be the first to shut their shops and to rush to their houses and barricade themselves there, as not one Christian was to be seen anywhere about. But on further inquiry I found that an attack upon the town, by the Bedouins on the outside, was hourly expected.

A *Maghrabee*—or Algerian—one of those who had come to Syria with Abd-el-Kader, then residing at Damascus, had that morning early, in a quarrel with the eldest son

190 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

of the chief of the Bedouin tribe, killed him in the town, and had made his escape to Damascus, and the Bedouins had now come to revenge themselves upon the town and its inhabitants.

The townspeople were very much grieved and alarmed. They had always been on very good terms with the Bedouins, and this murder, unless an amicable arrangement were made, would create a blood feud, and every inhabitant of the town, man and child, would be held responsible with his own life for the blood that was shed. Such is the cruel barbarous custom of Bedouin blood feuds, that they are frequently carried on for generations, and innocent people often suffer because they happen to belong to the same tribe, village, or town, as the guilty party.

I went up on the city wall near one of the gates, and found there the *Mudir*, petty governor, and the notables of the town, and among them Sheykh Moosa.

They were waiting for the arrival of the Bedouin chief, in order, if possible, to make some peaceable arrangement with him. In a little while we saw a large number of Bedouins—several thousand they appeared to be—some on horseback and others on foot, and all armed, some with spears and swords, and others with long guns, approaching the town. They were all shouting or yelling, and gesticulating in the most threatening manner. Things looked very serious indeed, as the town was almost defenceless. Few of the people had arms, and the walls by which the city was surrounded could be very easily scaled or a breach

made in them, as they were neither high nor thick.

The Muhammadans armed themselves with such weapons as they could lay their hands on, and with the few irregulars and police in the town—about fifty in all—determined, if things came to the worst, and negotiations failed, to defend themselves and their homes to the last. The Christians had all stowed themselves away in cellars underneath their houses, and were, as I afterwards found, in the most abject terror, fearing that if things went wrong they would, as usual, be the greatest sufferers.

When the Bedouins, who were led by their chief, came close to the gate, near the top of which we were waiting, the Mudir's secretary called out to the Bedouin

chief that the Mudir and Sheykh Moosa wished to speak to him.

“No parleying—no truce—no money—blood for blood—vengeance—the living for the dead—it must only be blood for blood !” was the cry in reply, from a thousand Bedouin throats.

The masses of Bedouins surged and swayed backwards and forwards, brandishing their spears, long guns, and curved swords, and were only awaiting the signal of their chief to begin the attack.

The chief was appealed to again, this time by Sheykh Moosa, and with apparently some effect, as it was in a short time agreed that Sheykh Moosa, the Mudir, and several of the notables of the town were to go out to the Bedouin Sheykh, and to try

to settle the matter. This they did, after very lengthy and tedious arguments and persuasions. It was agreed that the town was not to be held responsible for the murder, but, as it took place inside the town, the inhabitants should pay two hundred kees (about a thousand pounds) to the chief as ransom or redemption money, and the Bedouins undertook through their chief that no Syrian should be molested, and that Maghrabees* alone should be held responsible, and should suffer for the crime committed by one of their fellow-countrymen. Documents to this effect were drawn up, and were signed and sealed by both parties. The war-cry was

* Natives of Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers are all called Maghrabee.

changed into one of peace, a number of sheep were slaughtered and a great dinner prepared, to which the Bedouin chiefs and town notables sat down as a ratification of the agreement.

The Maghrabee who committed the murder was a stranger in the town, there were no Maghrabees with fixed residence there, and, as he escaped to join his people at Damascus, the Bedouins could only obtain his punishment by applying to the government at the Syrian capital; but as they knew how futile were all attempts to obtain justice from the legal authorities there, they determined to watch their opportunity and to secure revenge—justice they called it—for themselves.

CHAPTER X.

BLOOD FOR BLOOD.

SHEYKH HASSAN's preparations on Wednesday were similar to those he had made on the previous Monday, but he had prepared the incense for sprinkling instead of burning.

I was determined not to give way this as I had done the last time, and through that be the cause once more of bringing the Adjuration to a premature close.

We started from Sheykh Hassan's house a little after sunset, and reached the Ruins of the Palace in about three hours' time.

I sat in the same place as on the previous occasion, near the Mound, and close to Sheykh Hassan, who began the Adjuration by chanting in a low tone, and walking a few steps to the south and back to the centre, then to the east, and so on to the other points as before.

He then sat down and proceeded with the chanting and reciting, sprinkling incense from the jar, after which he resumed the chanting for about an hour. All at once there appeared the same pale light as before, and immediately after I saw a form approaching out of the darkness into the light. It came slowly through the light-filled space towards Sheykh Hassan and stood before him.

The form was that of a man, beautiful in shape and outline, dressed in a close-fitting

white robe, barefooted, with short fair hair on his head, which was uncovered ; his face was beardless. The man had a calm but stern expression, but there was nothing unpleasant in his face. He stood a few moments before Sheykh Hassan, then held out his hand and pointed to the jar that contained the incense. Sheykh Hassan spoke in quicker and more peremptory tones. The man approached more closely and held out his arm again. Sheykh Hassan sprinkled some incense before him, in a quick impatient manner, and said, “Mareekh, Mareekh must come ! ” The form retreated and disappeared in the darkness, and shortly another approached, very like the last. He was dressed in the same way, but his face had a very sad and woe-begone appearance. He moved towards Sheykh

Hassan, and, after bowing low, in a most suppliant manner, came close to him. I could see that he was speaking, but I was unable to hear what he said. Then he pointed to the jar. Sheykh Hassan rose and said, "Shanhoresh, Shanhoresh, he must appear."

The form then retired, and the air was filled with awful shrieks and wails, as of people in great agony of mind and body. I then experienced a strange sensation as of a multitude passing and repassing before me, and although the space around me seemed filled with many beings, I could see nothing and I heard only a babel of troubled voices. When these sounds had ceased, another being came forward, but the moment he appeared in the lighted space a cold, nervous shiver seized me, in-

creasing as he approached me. His face was human, but he had a penetrating, angry look, and my heart shrank within me when he stood and stared at me. He went up to Sheykh Hassan and said some words to him, which, however, I did not understand.

Sheykh Hassan then rose and took the jar of the incense, walked one or two steps forward, and poured some of the incense on the ground, and said, "This is to Mareekh. He must appear. He shall come." Then going another step forward, he poured out the rest of the incense, and said, "This is for Shanhoresh. He shall appear. He must come."

The form then walked away and disappeared in the darkness, whereupon there were strange low noises, like the din or

murmur of a great crowd at a distance. Then a sudden silence. A solemn and awful stillness, made more oppressive by contrast with the noises that had preceded it.

This silence was broken by a sudden noise as of the falling in of a large building. I turned my head to the direction of the sound, and I saw that a great chasm had been rent in the side of the Mound, from which two forms emerged. One was that of a dark, almost bronze-coloured, man, of ordinary height. He was bare-headed and barefooted, and wore a white garment, down to his ankles. He had dark hair and a beardless face, on which I noticed an expression of annoyance and irritation. The other form was of a man similar in dress, look, and expres-

sion, but with skin and hair of a lighter colour.

Each carried a book, or, rather, a large leather scroll, and they both walked up to Sheykh Hassan. He advanced to meet them, each of whom he saluted with a low bow, but which they did not return or even acknowledge.

Then Sheykh Hassan, pointing to the scroll that one of them carried, said to him—"You, Mareekh, the Book of the Past." And, turning to the other, and pointing to his scroll, he said, "You, Shangoresh, the Book of the Future."

Returning to Mareekh, Sheykh Hassan stretched out his arm, and spoke for a short time. Mareekh then walked slowly to one side, followed by Shangoresh, and they both stood at a very short

distance from the place where I was sitting.

Mareekh then, stretching out his hand, waved it toward the pale light, when all at once a scene opened out before us, in which I saw an Oriental one-storied house, surrounded by a garden. The house and the garden were shrouded in darkness, yet I could see them quite distinctly.

After a few seconds the door of the house opened, and I could see into the long passage, in which a lamp was burning brightly. Then I heard the sound of a child's voice, laughing very merrily. This was followed by the gentle voice of a woman ; and again I heard the sound of childish laughter.

Next I saw a man on horseback ride up and stop at the door of the garden, where he dismounted, and into which he entered.

I could not see his face, which was turned away from us ; nor could I distinguish his form, as he was enveloped in his burnous, or wide, loose cloak, and his head was entirely covered by the hood attached to the burnous.

I turned to Sheykh Hassan. There was a strange, eager look upon his face, an expression of intense astonishment. I had never seen him look so before. Mareekh and Shanhoresh were still standing at a short distance from us, and holding the scrolls in their arms.

The roof of the house then seemed to be removed, disclosing the rooms, so that I could see into the interior. On one side there was a room, which evidently was the kitchen, as there was a fire-place, raised about three or four feet above

the floor, and divided into two or three small open grates, each containing a little fire. On each of these grates there was a small cooking pot, and from the steam that escaped I could see that food was being cooked. A young negro woman stood near the fire-place, looking into one of the sauce-pans, and stirring its contents with a spoon which she held in her hand.

On the opposite side was another room, which was prettily furnished, with a low divan, made of a bright Eastern material, placed all round the room, and a number of Oriental rugs were lying about on the floor. On one side was a low octagonal table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and tortoise-shell, and on it rested a large brass tray. In its centre stood a candlestick, with three lamps burning brightly. Some

flat loaves of bread, a few spoons, a dish of olives and one of herbs, were placed round it. The tray was evidently laid out for the supper that was being cooked in the kitchen. A number of frames, containing Arabic mottoes and texts from the Kur'an, were hung upon the walls. At the other end of the room there were several shelves, with a number of books of various sizes and curious bindings, arranged on them, and close by a low table, on which there were papers and books, a blue porcelain inkstand, and other writing materials, all indicating that the occupier of the room was a man of literary tastes. There were two doors, one opening into the passage or hall, the other through the interior of the house to the kitchen.

On the divan, not far from the supper

table, sat an old woman, dressed in a loose robe of a white woollen material, who had some linen in her hands, which she was folding, and which she put on one side when she had finished. A little boy of about four or five years old stood near her, and unfolded each piece as soon as she put it down. The old woman shook her head at him every time he did so, but with a bright smile upon her face, to which the child answered by a ringing shout of laughter.

The door on the inner side of the room then opened, and a young woman, rather small, but beautiful in form and feature, entered. Her face was very lovely. She had large black eyes, and a gentle, loving expression. She came up to the boy and patted him on the head ; and the little one, taking hold of her hand, began to jump up

and down on the divan, looking the picture of health, and innocence, and happiness.

I then saw the man who had just come to the house, walk up the garden and enter the kitchen. He carried a short stout stick in his hand. It was slung round his wrist, and had an enlarged end, like a club, which was studded with large iron nail heads. The man, being barefooted, walked into the kitchen very quietly, and stood near the young negro woman ; she looked up from her cooking and gave a start, but he immediately plunged a dagger into her breast, and she fell backwards to the floor.

The man—I still could not see his face—left the kitchen, and entered the room where the two women and the child were.

In an instant he threw a thick woollen kerchief around the younger woman's

mouth and eyes, tying it in a knot ; then, drawing both her arms behind her back, he fastened them with a rope which he kept in his hand.

The old woman, who sat a few feet from them, and had neither seen nor heard the man come in, as she was just at that moment examining a piece of linen that she held in her hand, looked up, and her quiet placid face immediately assumed an astonished and startled expression, one full of surprise and alarm ; she quickly rose up and put her hand to the young woman's face trying to pull off the cloth which the man had tied over it. She attempted to call out ; but her voice seemed to have left her, and she could not utter a sound. The man pushed her back, and, striking her with his fist, she reeled and gave a short low scream. He

then struck her with the club, and she fell across the divan, her head almost touching the floor, and then he struck her on the head four or five blows in quick succession.

The child, meanwhile, had in its fright clung to the younger woman, whom I now recognized as Rasheedeh, from the descriptions of the place and its inmates that Sheykh Hassan had given me; and the poor little one, his own child, looked dazed with fright, and tried to hide himself in his mother's dress.

The man then turned to the boy, tore him away from his mother, and, raising the club, struck one blow at the back of the little head. The child fell down and never moved again.

Sheykh Hassan's expression was terrible to look at; his eyes seemed to be starting

out of their sockets, and the contortions of his face showed the agony that he was suffering. His arms and hands were pressed convulsively against his breast, and his knees bent down as if unable to carry him.

Poor Rasheedeh, whose face was almost covered by the kerchief, tried to free herself, but her struggles were in vain ; the rope tied round her arms was but too firmly grasped in the hand of the murderer.

The man then took a burnous which he carried over his shoulder in addition to the one that he wore, wrapped it round Rasheedeh, and lifting her in his arms, he carried her to the door leading into the passage.

On reaching it, he turned towards us. The hood of his burnous fell from his head, disclosing his face, and at that instant

Sheykh Hassan uttered a shriek of agony and darted towards the man.

It was Mustaffa !

Instantly there arose around us a hoarse croaking laughter, loud and long, in jeering, mocking tones ; and in a moment the whole scene, Mustaffa, Rasheedeh, the house, Shanhoresh, Mareekh, and even the light, all had vanished, and Sheykh Hassan and I were alone. I had scarcely time to collect my thoughts before I heard a clatter of horses' hoofs, and in a few minutes we were surrounded by a party of Bedouins who had galloped up to us, attracted, no doubt, by Sheykh Hassan's cry. They pointed at us their long lances, with which they all were armed.

In accordance with custom I called out to them : " We are friends. What seek you ? "

Sheykh Hassan did not speak.

“This man,” said a Bedouin, pointing to me, “is a Shani (Syrian), his accent and his dress prove it. Who is the other man?”

“His dress and appearance are those of a Maghrabee,” replied one of the Bedouins near Sheykh Hassan.

“Are you a Maghrabee?” asked the man who had first spoken, going closer to him.

“I am,” replied Sheykh Hassan.

“Then Blood for Blood!” cried several voices; and before he could say a word or even utter a sound, three lance-heads were buried in his breast, and Sheykh Hassan fell lifeless to the ground!

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNFINISHED LETTER.

MUSTAFFA, soon after Sheykh Hassan's death, committed another great crime. In a fit of passion, during a dispute with a Tunisian officer of rank, he struck him a blow which caused the officer's death. Mustaffa was condemned and executed, notwithstanding his brother's and other relatives' and friends' endeavours to obtain a reprieve. The sentence was carried out to satisfy the family of the officer, who had held a high position at Tunis.

Ali, Mustaffa's only brother, who had been living all the time at Susa, where he carried on his mercantile business with great success, went to Walid to settle his brother's affairs and to realise the property, to which he was the only heir.

The house and the management of the estate were under the care of Abdallah, a negro slave, who was about the same age as Mustaffa, and had been purchased when quite a child by Mustaffa's father, and was brought up by him with his sons. He was considered and treated more like one of his family than a slave, and, being very careful and faithful, had been entrusted by Mustaffa's father with the management of the property. He had married a negro girl who had also been reared from infancy in Mustaffa's father's house, and

she proved a worthy wife of the honest steward.

Abdallah and his wife had received from Mustaffa's father shortly before his death their freedom, which, according to Muhammadan usage was conferred by a legal deed attested before a court of justice. Mustaffa retained Abdallah as his steward, in fact he gave him the entire charge of the estate, as Mustaffa was too indolent to look after anything himself.

After the winding up of the estate, and on the eve of Ali's departure to Susa, Abdallah told him that on going round the house one night, to see that all was in order, he heard faint sounds proceeding from a part of the house which, though furnished, was rarely used. He stopped to listen, and the sounds, which were repeated, were groans

as of someone in pain. He withdrew the bolt which was fixed to the door on the outside of the first room, and, on passing into the next apartment, he saw a young woman sitting, almost crouching, in a corner of the room. He spoke to her, but, not receiving any answer, he approached her, holding the lantern that he carried close to her face. Her eyes were wide open, but she seemed quite unconscious of his presence, and her arms were tied together behind her back. Abdallah at once unloosened the cord, and went and fetched his wife Sadeka from the other part of the house, who, to their great astonishment, recognized her as Rasheedeh, the wife of Sheykh Hassan.

Abdallah and Sadeka did their best to revive her, washing her face and hands in

cold water, and applying the juice of unripe grapes to her temples and the back of her head. After a time consciousness returned and she recognized Abdallah and his wife. She at once sank down at his feet, and, embracing them, she implored him in piteous tones to protect her from his master Mustaffa. Abdallah raised her up and promised to do so, even at the risk of his own life, and gave her his word to that effect by the most solemn oath that he could take.

Abdallah and Sadeka watched with her all that night ; they tried to soothe and to comfort her ; but she could not sleep, and at times wandered a good deal. All that they could gather from her words that night was that she had been brought to that place by Mustaffa.

Abdallah heard the next morning of the

terrible tragedy that had been enacted at Sheykh Hassan's house, and at once assuming that Mustaffa was the perpetrator of the crimes, he taxed him with them when he came to the house the next day.

Mustaffa was in a great state of alarm, and appealed to Abdallah's generosity not to disclose his crime, but to save him. Abdallah, having no desire to be the accuser, or, as he would call it, the betrayer of the eldest son of his dear old master who had always been very kind and good to him, promised to keep the matter secret, but only on one condition, the breaking of which would release him from his promise and compel him to bring everything to the knowledge of the authorities, this condition being that Mustaffa should never again enter into the apartments occupied by Rasheedeh, or in-

trude into her presence. This condition Mustaffa undertook to keep.

Abdallah and Sadeka bestowed every care on Rasheedeh but it was only occasionally that she was conscious of her position and surroundings, and very seldom alluded to the past when talking to Abdallah and Sadeka. From what they could learn from her broken conversation, it appeared that Mustaffa had for a long time persecuted Rasheedeh with declarations of love, which she had always firmly and indignantly repelled, and that on the very day that Sheykh Hassan went away Mustaffa had with great passion renewed his dishonourable proposals, but that Rasheedeh had turned away in anger and disgust from him, and had threatened to expose Mustaffa's real character and conduct to Sheykh Hassan

as soon as he came home. This she would undoubtedly have done before had it not been for the great affection Sheykh Hassan had for his cousin, and the dread of giving to her husband such intense sorrow, as the discovery of Mustaffa's base and cowardly character would be to him.

The fear of such an exposure, added to his own wicked passions, had incited Mustaffa to commit those cruel deeds, and he brought Rasheedeh to his house, hoping to keep her there to himself in seclusion, as he was not married, and with the exception of Mustaffa and Abdallah and his wife, no one else lived in the house.

Rasheedeh rarely spoke, and it was with difficulty that she could be induced to take her food. She sometimes would call for her husband, and sometimes for her little boy,

222 SHEYKH HASSAN, THE SPIRITUALIST.

wondering where they were, or why they did not come.

One morning, the day after Sheykh Hassan left Walid for the Khilweh in the desert, Rasheedeh seemed to be much better, being more sensible than she had been for many days past. Abdallah and Sadeka had never seen her so bright and happy before. She told them that she had seen her little boy in the night, and that he was coming again that day and would always be with her after that; and she asked for a sheet of paper that she might write to Sheykh Hassan to beg him to come, so that they might all be together once more. She asked Sadeka to take special care in arranging her hair that day, and to put a rose into it, her husband being very fond of roses and she would wear it for his sake.

Abdallah brought her the paper and writing materials and put them on a low table close to the divan on which she sat. A short time afterwards he went into the room to see if she wanted anything ; he found her leaning forward, one arm on the low table near her, and her head resting on her right hand.

In her other hand, which lay on her breast, she held a sheet of paper on which she had written the words—“ My Sheykh Hassan. Come—”

The rose had fallen out of her hair on to the unfinished letter. Her eyes were closed, and she looked so calm and peaceful, and Abdallah thought that she was asleep.

Poor Rasheedeh was dead.

THE END.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. H. ALLEN AND CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE S.W.

1

-v

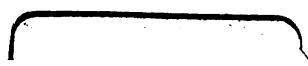


Table 1



